

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
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
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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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 27, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 3—The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended)

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 3, The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to reintroduce this legislation that would establish an open, efficient and stable domestic marketplace for Manitoba goods, services, investments and people.

This bill makes administrative amendments to The Labour Mobility Act and The Regulated Health Professions Act to reflect that the government of Manitoba and the governments of Canada and the other provinces and territories have agreed to a new domestic trade agreement, the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 208—The Conflict of Interest Act

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Appuyé par le membre from The Maples, je propose la première

lecture du projet de la loi 208, Loi sur les conflits d'intérêts, The Conflict of Interest Act.

Translation

I move, seconded by the member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), that Bill 208, The Conflict of Interest Act, be now read a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Assiniboia, seconded by the honourable member for The Maples, that Bill 208, The Conflict of Interest Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Fletcher: There have been no substantive changes to the Manitoba conflict of interest act in 30 years, with the exception of adding a commissioner.

I have long stated in this place that this act needs to be reformed. I introduced legislation in the last session; nothing was done. I—and I introduced a motion in the last session, a resolution; nothing has been done. And I'm going to do this again in hopes that we will update the conflict of interest legislation to reflect the expectations and realities of the 21st century.

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

Bill 210—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Appuyé par The Maples, je propose la première lecture du Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba; The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

Translation

I move, seconded by the member for The Maples, that Bill 210, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Assiniboia, seconded by the honourable member for The Maples, that Bill 210, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, be now read and first time.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, the no-fault insurance scheme that we have in Manitoba has many positive attributes, and that was introduced by the Filmon government. However, there is an area that must be reformed, and that is taking the limits away that deal with catastrophically injured individuals. These limits not only disadvantage those who need help the most, but it adversely affects young people as they obviously live longer than, say, someone who's injured near the end of their life.

Madam Speaker, these amendments will ensure that the intent of no-fault insurance is followed and that people who are injured in car accidents can indeed reach to the best of-possible level that they were before their accident regardless of how young they are.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Canadian Free Trade Agreement

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I am pleased today to once again highlight this government's joining with governments from coast to coast in signing the Canada Free Trade Agreement, otherwise known as CFTA.

Like the New West Partnership Trade Agreement, which we joined at the beginning of the year, the Canada Free Trade Agreement will reduce and eliminate, as much as possible, barriers to the free movement of people, goods, services and investments within Canada and to an—and to establish an open, efficient and stable domestic market.

Increased trade means more choice for consumers, more markets for businesses to sell their goods and services, and opportunities for more jobs.

In fact, Madam Speaker, it is estimated that Manitoba's gross domestic product, GDP, will increase by \$2 billion as a result of our signing the CFTA.

The agreement makes the rules governing domestic trade more open and transparent and the CFTA's rules align with our commitments in Canada's international trade agreements, helping Manitoba companies do business more easily both here in Canada and around the world.

By better aligning rules and regulations between jurisdictions, we not only reduce unnecessary red tape but we remove significant barriers to internal trade.

* (13:40)

To do this, the agreement established a regulatory reconciliation process to help address regulatory measures that are consistent with the CFTA but may still act as a barrier to doing business across provincial and territorial lines. It also creates processes to facilitate co-operation when new regulatory measures are developed to avoid differences that may impair trade, investment or labour mobility.

Madam Speaker, I look forward in the coming days to once again debating the necessary legislative changes to fully implement the Canada Free Trade Agreement and ask all members to join me in supporting the modernization of our country's internal trading system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Manitoba is a trading province, and this government needs to defend our interests. Manitoba has the highest proportion of trade with Canadian jurisdictions of all the provinces; 50 per cent of Manitoba's exports go to east, while 40 per cent go to our western neighbours.

We are not opposed to free trade, but we also believe in fair trade. Manitoba businesses depend on trade that is stable and fair. While it is important to break down trade barriers nationally and internationally, this government has not taken a pragmatic approach to its trading relationships for Manitoba: for Manitoba jobs, for Manitoba workers and for their paycheques.

We want to ensure that the benefits stay local and that Manitoba's workers are not worse off. We want to see increased jobs locally and return

on investment in our communities. We are deeply concerned that the Pallister government has not protected any of the activities of its Crowns. Every other jurisdiction in Canada has protections for its energy Crowns. Manitoba does not.

The new agreement fails to account for workers' rights and safety. This government has failed time and again to protect jobs in Manitoba, and now they have failed to advocate for our province, our workers and our indigenous peoples who stand to lose in this agreement.

The CFTA does little to address the rights of workers and fails to put protections in place that ensure fair wages and safe working conditions. As Canada grapples with the consequences of climate change, the CFTA sorely lacks a strong environmental plan. We must stand up for environmental and worker protections.

Manitobans deserve pragmatic trade arrangements that benefit Manitoba. A lot of work needs to be done to ensure that Manitobans are truly protected.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, with respect to the Canada Free Trade Agreement, Manitoba Liberals support the modernized trade rules, the coverage of the service economy and much of the energy sector and want to see the jobs and innovation increase in Manitoba and in Canada.

We are cautiously optimistic about the moves to standardize regulations in the trucking industry, which is particularly important to Manitoba, but we will have to see how things work out before coming to a final conclusion.

We note the possibility of enhanced Aboriginal procurement, but only if governments decide to use that option, and we hope the Manitoba government will be fair in efforts helping Aboriginal and Manitoba businesses.

While we look positively to the greater openness of trade within Canada, at the same time, we're concerned that the Pallister government may have given away more than it needed in terms of the tools

to make sure Manitoba businesses do well. Indeed, just as with the government's approach to cannabis, where the government is favouring large corporations from outside of Manitoba instead of helping small Manitoba businesses, we are concerned that the government may build a province based on companies based elsewhere instead of building small Manitoba business-companies so that our companies can grow and do well around the world.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Merci. Miigwech.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Yazidi Refugees in Canada

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Madam Speaker, this summer the eyes of the world followed with compassion and amazement the harrowing story of a Yazidi boy thought dead, yet found and brought to Manitoba. Emad Mishko Tamo, once presumed dead, was rescued from ISIS captivity and reunited with his mother here in Winnipeg where they have found a home.

Sadly, Emad is just one of an estimated 50,000 Yazidis displaced in northern Iraq who are being persecuted by ISIS.

While this persecution is not new, the threat faced by the Yazidi people today is more immanent and terrifying than ever before. Men and boys are systematically shot, beheaded or burned alive, while women and girls are captured and violently abused in sexual slavery.

Remarkably, Winnipeg has become home to one of Canada's largest Yazidi communities and these people have become my friends. On October 25th, 2016, these atrocities were acknowledged by Canada's House of Commons, and the federal government promised to bring 1,200 Yazidi refugees to Canada before the end of 2017. Sadly, this has not happened, and the Yazidi families in our country, province and city are waiting and hoping that their family members will be rescued from ISIS.

Therefore, we must recognize the need to resolve this continuing tragedy facing the Yazidi people, to welcome them with open arms, and also to appreciate their resilience, strength and courage as an emerging community in our province.

Please join me in welcoming Emad and other members of Winnipeg's Yazidi community in the gallery today.

Anishinabe Place of Hope

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Madam Speaker, the Anishinabe Place of Hope, located in the constituency of Logan, truly lives up to its name.

Recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, it continues to serve, proudly and lovingly, the move of marginalized citizens from a life of despair to a life of hope and meaning. The Anishinabe Place of Hope offers safe and clean shelter, does coaching on life skills, counselling and one-on-one personalized supports.

Its First Steps to Employment Project offers 20-unit co-ed transitional housing designed to support single adults living in poverty, dysfunctional environments and/or recovering from addictions who have been clean or sober for a minimum of one year while they develop positive employment skills. This program consists of single persons who are unemployed or underemployed and have demonstrated that they have made a commitment to change.

I have personally heard the story of one of the female residents who's here with us today and how her life has been dramatically changed since she was accepted into the program.

Support from provincial and city governments have made it possible to offer much-needed help to people to overcome life's many challenges. Our provincial government should look at the successful operation of the Anishinabe Place of Hope and replicate it in other places if it desires value-for-money projects. When a program transforms citizens from unemployed, some with ill health and many directionless, to employed, productive and healthy lives, now that is value-for-money program that should be pursued.

I request my colleagues to join me in thanking and welcoming the caring and supportive staff of the Anishinabe Place of Hope who are here today: Executive Director Reverend Margaret Mullin—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Is there leave to allow the member to complete her statement? *[Agreed]*

The honourable member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino), to quickly—

Ms. Marcelino: Co-ordinator Crystal McKeen and place resident Nicole Smith. You are invaluable to our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Prairie Partners Inc.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Madam Speaker, I rise here today inspired by Prairie Partners Inc. Prairie Partners Inc. is a community-based agency that operates a number of ventures and works for the betterment of the community of Boissevain and the area of Arthur-Virden.

Established in 1968 as Boissevain association for disabilities, this organization grew over the past 50 years into a broad-range organization that it has become today.

Prairie Partners offers a variety of programs in the community for adults living with intellectual disabilities, involving with them with meaningful employment opportunities. Prairie Partners' programs ranges from a housecleaning service, seasonal lawn care known as take care cleaning and yard care, and a fully functional woodworking wood shop known as Handcrafters.

* (13:50)

One of Prairie Partners' many success stories that I would like 'pecifically' to highlight today is the Sawmill Tea & Coffee Company. The Sawmill is a quaint coffee house, restaurant and gift shop that provides a comfortable space for all to gather for a meal or casual drink. The coffee and gift shop that is run by Prairie Partners program 'participants' and staff, all the meals, baking and beverages are made right on site and served proudly. I personally recommend their lattes that gives Starbucks a run for their money.

Prairie Partners Inc. currently employs 25 individuals and approximately 50 more positions for the community for support workers, job coaches and management staff. On behalf of those present today, I would like to acknowledge the dedication, the support and inclusion that Prairie Partners provides for the Boissevain community and their efforts for helping Manitobans living with disabilities to reach their full potential.

Please join me in thanking executive director, Jason Dyck, staff and members of the Prairie Partners Inc. who are here today joining us in the gallery this afternoon. Congratulations.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask for leave to have the names of those who attended with us today to be printed in Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have their names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Prairie Partners Inc.: Jason Dyck, executive director; Cathy Kempthorne; Kerry Lynn Lamb; Stacey MacDonald; Tracy McCutcheon; Doug Stobbe; Kholiswa Stower

West Broadway Youth Outreach

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I'm always proud to share stories from my community of good people doing great work on behalf of others. Just last Friday, a small group of students from Red River College's Creative Communications program hosted a radiothon fundraiser on behalf of West Broadway Youth Outreach.

This daylong volunteer effort raised funds and also gathered much-needed school supplies for WBYO's Homework Club. Huge thanks are owed to the Red River College instructor Dan Vadeboncoeur and students Dani Wenger, Cody Zaporzan, Talia Smith, Neil Noonan and Taylor Allen. I very much enjoyed my on-air interview with them and I want to wish all of them the best of luck in their future endeavours.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's not difficult to understand why these students lent their time, their energy and their expertise to an organization like WBYO. Led by their unstoppable director, Ken Opaleke, and assistant director, Loana Valdez, this organization offers crucial life skills and recreational programming for youth aged four and up. WBYO believes that free, structured programming and positive role models instill a sense of accountability, teach life skills and encourage positive behaviour to help children achieve their infinite potential.

WBYO programs include the Homework Club, Mathletes and literacy programs that allow students to learn in a fun and supportive environment with one-on-one assistance. These programs complement and aid the support of educators, ensuring that each child's learning style is considered and their fullest potential is encouraged. In return, WBYO rewards hard-working students with free laptops, new bikes and outings to the movies, concerts, the Folk Festival, restaurants and sporting events such as Jets, Bombers and Moose games, all donated by the caring residents of Winnipeg.

In closing, I want to thank both Ken Opaleke and Loana Valdez for kindly joining us here in the gallery at the Legislature today.

Madam Speaker: I also want to give special mention to Ken Opaleke, who is now celebrating his 26th consecutive year as director of WBYO. Ken, thank you so much for all you have done and all you will continue to do for children in our community.

Thank you.

Eric Irwin

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, all municipal leaders give generously of their time and talents to help others. Some really stand out, like Mayor Eric Irwin of Dauphin, who passed away suddenly on November 24th.

Eric was more than Dauphin's mayor for nearly 30 years, he was a tireless community builder and a strong advocate for growth and development in Dauphin. Eric could be an unstoppable force of nature. His tenacity, passion and vision for his community often resulted in something getting fixed, improved or built to benefit everyone in the Parkland.

Eric was involved in Dauphin's new city hall, the heritage restoration of Dauphin's CN station, Credit Union Place, gas bars and grocery store, and the community—or the Countryfest cinema, to name a few. As president of Dauphin's Countryfest since 1988, Eric was a driving force that led a tremendous group of volunteers to build an incredibly successful country music festival in Manitoba's Parkland region.

Mayor Irwin was also a 30-year rotary member, served as a president of the Co-op and also served as a director on many other local committees and provincial boards: the Manitoba festival industry events association, the Manitoba society of disabilities and the board of Travel Manitoba, to name a few.

Eric is named a life bencher of the Law Society of Manitoba, a distinguished co-operator and businessperson of the year by Dauphin's chamber of commerce.

Eric and his wife Kim moved to Dauphin in 1979 where they started a law practice, raised three children and became active participants in the community. Eric Irwin was first elected to city council in 1998 and was elected mayor in 2010.

On behalf of the constituency of Dauphin, I extend my deepest sympathies to Eric's family, his wife Kim and his children, and to his many friends

and family. Manitoba's Parkland lost a strong leader and he'll be missed.

Introduction of Guests

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

We have seated in the public gallery from H.S. Paul School 64 grade 5 and 6 students under the direction of Shannon Young, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mayor of Dauphin Eric Irwin Condolences

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's with a heavy heart that I want to acknowledge the passing of Mayor Eric Irwin of Dauphin. Having had a chance to spend a bit of time there over the years, it's true to say that his mark on the community was indelible. Not only did he serve many years as mayor and serve on council, he also turned Countryfest into one of the biggest music festivals in our province. It draws people from right across Manitoba and even Midwestern US and western Canada to town during the summer. I'm sure that Mayor Irwin will miss not seeing Florida Georgia Line and Eric Church this summer.

He also took the time out when I was just getting started to meet with me and to come out to hear me speak, and he had a real impact. He will be sorely missed and I send my condolences to his family, as I'm sure do all members of this House.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Deputy Premier): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, as well as the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), on the words that they said.

And, of course, with respect to Mayor Eric Irwin, I've had the opportunity to meet with Eric Irwin on a few occasions. He's a remarkable man who's done many, many things for his community and I just want to say, on behalf of our government, that our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends on the—on his passing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Emergency Medical Services Grandview Station Closure

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I was in the constituency of Dauphin over the weekend and it was very amazing to see communities in that region come together, the Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation as well as the residents of Grandview. It was great to see the two communities joining hands and standing up together.

What's unfortunate is the circumstance in which they are uniting, and that is to protest the closure of the ambulance station in Grandview. Now families and seniors shared their concerns that losing the EMS station will result in a cut to a front-line service that their community relies on and may, in fact, be a slippery slope towards losing other much needed health services in their community.

Now, that fall feast where they gathered is a reminder that health care is the heart of any community and it's strength directly affects the success of the families who live there.

Now, will this government begin to listen to the people who are voicing opposition to these never-ending health-care cuts, starting with the cancel—or reversal of this plan to close the ambulance station in Grandview?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

I know, speaking of needing health care, he and his family will be needing it relatively shortly, as they are expecting a new one in their family, and on behalf of our caucus, we want to congratulate him and his wife Lisa on that great news. So congratulations to you two.

* (14:00)

When it comes to EMS, the member opposite will know that the 2013 report, which was authored by Reg Toews, was commissioned to better ambulance care throughout Manitoba—in particular, in Westman. There are a number of people who've spoken well of it, not the least of which was the former minister of Health, Theresa Oswald, who said that the recommendations would lead to a more coordinated and a more responsive era for EMS in our province, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Sincere thanks for those kind words off the top there from the minister.

However, one of the things that seems to be raising the ire of the residents in Grandview is that there seems to be some dispute over the rationale that's been announced for the closure. So where the government has said that the Grandview EMS station is going to be closed because of low call volume or slow response times, people in the community went and did the research, and what they found is that their EMS station in Grandview responded to more calls in the last six months than 62 per cent of the other stations in the Prairie Mountain Health region. And then they also further discovered that the response time is faster than the average response time in every category except for one, where they are only 11 seconds slower.

So when we take into account that there's going to be closures across the Westman and the Parkland regions, the people of Boissevain, Oak Lake, Swan Lake, if the facts are in dispute about Grandview, how can they be sure that the ambulance station closures in their communities are rational?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I look forward to speaking to rural representatives at AMM in Brandon later today and tomorrow.

Certainly there's been many concerns about EMS service in rural Manitoba, particularly Westman, for many years, as the call volumes have increased but there haven't been able to get the response times. They needed full-time paramedics. It's one of the reasons why we committed to hiring 28 new paramedics last year. I'm sure that there'll be more resources added to paramedics' service so that individuals can ensure that they get the service when they need it from a full-time paramedic.

In terms of the rationale, the member opposite, I would give the rationale that the EMS service review was an important process that we went through to improve emergency services in Manitoba. That rationale is from the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), Madam Speaker.

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

Municipal Funding Agreements Government Intention

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I look forward to hearing what the reeves and mayors and councillors at AMM have to say about the closures of the ambulance stations across western Manitoba.

We know that, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is shirking responsibilities in downloading the cuts to other layers—to other levels of government in this province. We also know that they're causing real damage with their plan to freeze operating grants for every municipality across the province and ending that decades-old cost-sharing arrangement to finance public transit in this province, which provided much-needed stability in terms of predictability around funding.

Now, without any consultation with municipalities, this government has also decided to download new responsibilities onto them without any corresponding increase in funding.

Will the Premier commit to real growth-oriented funding for municipalities, real support for transit and to start listening to municipal leaders?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Acting Minister of Municipal Relations): I'm glad to stand in place to address the questions from the Leader of the Opposition.

And unlike the previous government, we have listened to Manitobans. We made sure that we had the ear of the municipal government. We're looking forward to those conversations in the next couple of days.

Our commitment to fair say is what the municipalities asked for. We're listening to their priorities, and we'll determine the best path going forward.

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

Mr. Kinew: That's a perfect illustration of how this government is not listening to municipal leaders. What municipal leaders asked for was fair say, but also a fair share, and with the selective hearing practised by this government they said, well, we heard fair say. But then, as it turns out in the Throne Speech, there is the downloading of new responsibilities without any sort of consultation with municipal leaders, which shows us that there's not even delivery on that half of the lobbying platform of the AMM from the last election.

So, again, will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) reverse course on these cuts, which are harming municipalities all across the province, and commit to a real relationship with municipalities, starting with the fair share and fair say campaign being on it?

Mr. Eichler: Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition hasn't been doing his homework. Winnipeg has the third highest funding in all of Canada. We have made sure that the basket funding approach means less red tape, fewer application processes and more unconditional funding so that the City can invest in the measures as they see as their priorities.

Get onside with us, Mr. Opposition.

Madam Speaker: A reminder to members that, in accordance with our rules, as well as page 604 of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice by O'Brien and Bosc, comments and questions should be addressed to and through the Chair, and I would ask the co-operation of all members.

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

Mr. Kinew: Thank you for your learned direction, Madam Speaker.

We know that there's many contradictions in the Premier's climate change plan, but none seem to be so glaring as the decision to undermine transit systems all across the province.

Now, in addition to, under this Premier's watch, you know, them bringing forward a plan that will see clean energy prices increase year over year over year and the costs being compounded year after year, they've also made the decision to hold fossil fuel prices flat, and then they've added on top of that the decision to cut funding for municipalities on the side of transit there.

So, in addition to that, they're also lobbying on top operating-grants freezes and backing off the funding formulas that have given predictability for municipalities.

Will the Premier commit to reversing that freeze on operating grants for municipalities next year?

Mr. Eichler: I'd like to quote for the members opposite: We also see them increasing some flexibility for municipalities through unconditional grants to municipalities rather than conditional grants, he said, adding, past grants so often have been so narrowly focused, it limited access or use of

them. That's by Chris Goertzen, the mayor of Steinbach and the president of AMM.

So, obviously, Madam Speaker, we have been listening to Manitobans, and we made sure that we'll have that conversation now and over the next few days as well.

Indigenous Children in Care Permanent Guardianship Consultations

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Last week the government announced they would be legislating how foster parents can transition to permanent guardianship of children in care.

I think it's important to reflect on the history of devolution of child welfare here in Manitoba, where adoption and permanent guardianship of indigenous children outside our communities, families and culture were absolutely off the table by indigenous leadership. It was a non-starter.

So it begs the question, Madam Speaker, who did the minister consult and engage with in respect of permanent guardianship of indigenous children?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Our government is very proud of the reform package that we introduced. We know that changes need to happen after 17 years of NDP where you saw skyrocketed numbers of children in care, skyrocketed numbers of days in care for individuals. We put forth a comprehensive plan, an evidence-based plan that will allow more children to stay in the homes or be a part of permanent, long-term caregivers here in the province of Manitoba.

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

Culturally Appropriate Placements

Ms. Fontaine: The first TRC call to action calls for meaningful change in the child-welfare system, and I quote: We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments regardless of where they reside.

* (14:10)

How will the new legislation ensure that 'indigenous'-indigenous children will be protected to

stay in their communities, families and culture in facilitating permanent guardianship?

Mr. Fielding: Our utmost desire and priority is maintaining the safety of children and ensuring that you have a lifelong commitment to those individuals.

Our government has entered into a partnership, something called Family Group Conferencing, with Ma Mawi, at the Winnipeg Foundation, that will show upwards of 70 per cent of indigenous families can be maintained with those individuals.

That is the No. 1 priority for this government. That is one of the elements of our comprehensive, long-term plan to address the child-welfare crisis that was created under the NDP.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Cora Morgan, AMC's family advocate, is worried that the new bill will facilitate indigenous children being taken away permanently from their families and communities.

There are many people that are worried about this new legislation, particularly when we look at the history of residential schools and the '60s scoop. I've shared in this House, Madam Speaker, that I, myself, was apprehended by CFS at the age of six or seven, I'm not sure. And despite all the abuse, at the end of the day, I just wanted to be with my mom. Most children want to be with their parents.

Will the minister commit to ensuring indigenous children stay in their communities with their families and within their culture?

Mr. Fielding: Our utmost priority is to ensure reunification with families. That is clearly what's been laid out in our child-welfare plan.

What we've talked about in terms of a subsidized guardianship or supports for guardians, we know that lifelong commitments, the lifelong outcomes of these individuals are much better. The one thing that we talked about is extending financial supports to individuals that are part of it. The court system right now is the one that determines anything, whether it be a legal guardianship that'd be a part of that.

The courts also needs to take into consideration Aboriginal culture and heritage way—when making those decisions, and the CFS agencies as well as the families are notified of this and are able to make their comment to the courts at that point if they have some concerns. That process will not change.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Request for Government Plan

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Campaign 2000's recent report shows that Manitoba has the highest child poverty rate in this country: 27.5 per cent. That means that more than two out of every seven children in Manitoba live in poor housing and are hungry.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) promised a review of the poverty reduction strategy to launch a new strategy by the end of this year, yet a Throne Speech has been released a mere month out from the end of the year and no action on that commitment.

Has the minister finished his review of the strategy, and does he plan to release an alternative?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): The only alternative is socialists' alternative facts when it comes to things like poverty reduction.

Our Manitoba government is supportive of low-'inhum' individuals—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —in terms of poverty.

What we want—and what we know under the NDP government, that they had—the children were—highest child poverty capital of anywhere in the country. What we are committed to doing is introducing a new child reduction plan that's associated with the legislation; we'll be introducing that in the coming days. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Public Transit Fare Increase Impact on Low-Income Manitobans

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I reiterate: 27.5 per cent of children are living in poverty.

The Premier's cuts to Winnipeg Transit mean higher fares and decreased services for transit users. This cut will impact newcomers, indigenous people, low-income earners, people with disabilities and women who rely on transit to get to work, school or to access health care. This 25 per cent—25-cent hike to transit means less money spent on food or warm winter clothing.

Will the minister admit that the transit cuts disproportionately affect Manitoba's most vulnerable?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): What this government is committed to is making life a little bit easier for low-income Manitobans, and that's exactly what we want to do.

Our child—our poverty reduction strategy is something where we're going to announce we're going to do true consultation. What I did find out when I first became minister is that the NDP did no consultation at all—at all—when it came to child—in terms to—child poverty reductions. That's something that you can get on board with us in terms of ridership and get the job done for low-income Manitobans.

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

Poverty Reduction Strategy Request for Government Plan

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): We know what consultation means with this government: zero people being consulted, not being listened to.

Campaign 2000 recommended five initiatives that this—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —government can take to lift Manitobans out of poverty. It includes a initiative to raise the minimum wage by 15 per cent—not three nickels—and increase the supply of non-precarious full-time jobs. It calls to increase access to education for low-income parents so that they can get out of poverty and get good quality jobs.

But the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has actually frozen minimum wage, increased transit and hiked tuition for post-secondary students.

Will the minister reverse the Premier's cuts—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): What I can tell you is this government is committed to measurement; it's committed to targets—that's one thing that the anti-poverty advocates have talked about in terms of the NDP's plan. It wasn't there.

Where they got it wrong, we're going to get it right, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Public Transit Services Municipal Funding Agreement

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): This Pallister government continues to be focused only on the bottom line, and increasingly that's coming at the expense of those who are most marginalized in our society.

Terminating the 50-50 transit agreement means thousands of people across this province are facing difficult choices as the fares go up and service levels go down. Life just got that much more unaffordable for Manitoba families. Good quality transit is critical for young people, for students, for workers in this province, and if the Pallister government is at all serious about climate change it needs to invest in our transit system.

Why has the Pallister government turned its back on so many Manitobans by walking away from the 50-50 transit agreement?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Acting Minister of Municipal Relations): Actually, the funding has increased 30 per cent since 2011. Actually, it's \$3 million—*[interjection]* We're talking—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: —about funding, fellows, which—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: —if you pay attention, maybe you'll learn something.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: This funding is actually nearly \$3 million more than NDP provided in 2015, a grant that has a total of \$115 million.

They have their fair say, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder again to members that when asking questions or answering that it be directed through the Chair and that members be recognized by their constituencies or by their portfolio names.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you Madam Speaker, through you to the government, I ask.

Only this government would consider a funding cut to transit to be generous and to be a lot, and I'm

telling you, Madam Speaker, that Manitobans are sure standing up and making their voices heard.

Today, a West Broadway resident, Emily, told the CBC that the large fare increase and declining service levels mean impossible choices for her to have to make now between healthy food and mobility.

For thousands of Manitobans these fare increases will mean less opportunity and less mobility for them and their families.

I ask again: Why is this Pallister government focused only on the bottom line and not on the needs of people like Emily?

Mr. Eichler: We're investing well over \$200 million in major transit projects across Winnipeg, including rapid transit phase 1 and 2; additional \$27.4 million for Public Transit Infrastructure Fund projects, including the purchase of 60 new buses; 7.68 in additional direct funding for 'burt' part 'burse'—bus purchasers since taking office.

*(14:20)

Through this single window unconditional operating grant to the City of Winnipeg, they have \$115 million they can spend as they see fit.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, what I'm telling this minister, through you, is that Manitobans see that an \$8.3-million cut this year in funding is going to have real effects for them and their families. Groups representing newcomers, young people, indigenous Manitobans have organized themselves and they continue to speak out against the fare increases and declining transit service.

International student Nicolette Jones told the media today that fare increases leave her socially isolated. As she rightly points out, 25 cents might not seem like a lot to some, but to her it means a lot. It's the key to her success and for her to build a future in this province.

I ask the minister once again: Will—why is he—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Eichler: Again, I've been about as clear as I can to members opposite that funding has remained constant with the City of Winnipeg and for all municipalities as we go across Manitoba. In fact, we'll have those conversations over the next

couple of days with the City of Winnipeg, with municipalities, in order to sure—make sure that they have their fair say.

This is something we ran on, Madam Speaker. This is something we committed to: making sure the municipalities have the priorities of their own in their government levels, so they have those fundings and a fair say in that understanding.

Agriculture Industry Nitrous Oxide Emissions

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the government's climate change plan completely ignores fully one third of Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions, including almost all methane and nitrous oxide, which, of course, come from agriculture. In fact, nitrous oxide is never mentioned in the government's plan, even though reducing a single ton of nitrous oxide emissions is the equivalent to reducing 300 tons of carbon dioxide.

Helping farmers reduce nitrous oxide emissions would be better for the environment and for farmers' pocketbooks.

Can the Minister for Sustainable Development explain why the government is doing nothing to help farmers reduce the most potent greenhouse gas?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Acting Minister of Sustainable Development): I thank the member opposite for that question.

And our Auditor General clearly reported that in previous years, the NDP totally failed to meet targets that were so unrealistic that they would have required the equivalent of every gas- and diesel-powered vehicle off of the road. The Auditor General noted that there was a lack of progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as in developing a plan for adapting a climate change impact.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, it's true the Auditor General's report was pretty damning in terms of what happened under the NDP.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gerrard: But at the same time, Madam Speaker, this—the NDP failed, in part, because they forgot about agriculture. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, the Pallister's government unfortunately has more holes than Swiss cheese.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gerrard: It ignores working with farmers to reduce the most potent greenhouse gas, nitrous oxide, and to ensure—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —it goes into the ground to grow crops instead of into the air to warm the planet.

I table 18 different ways to reduce nitrous oxide more than 30 per cent. Reaching this goal would cut greenhouse gas emissions equal to heating every home in Manitoba or driving every car in our province.

Does the minister think that farmers don't care about the environment? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the member opposite for his comments. I think our government has been really going to task, meeting and talking to people all across this province about climate change and our new plan. And farmers are very engaged in these conversations. We listen not only to our farmers but we listen to every Manitoban, and they have the opportunities to be part of this process.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Sadly, nitrous oxide was not even mentioned once in this government's climate change plan. In fact, nitrous oxide, which is 300 times more potent as a warming agent than carbon dioxide and persists in the atmosphere for more than 100 years, is pretty important. On the NDP's watch, though, it went up by 44 per cent.

This government talks about value for money. Now, reducing nitrous oxide would provide the biggest bang for their buck.

Why is this government once again following in the footsteps of the NDP and ignoring one of the most effective and inexpensive ways to combat climate change?

Ms. Clarke: I thank the member opposite.

Our government's very proud that we've developed not only a practical, but a measurable and realistic Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan

that will protect our environment; it will foster green growth and spur innovation. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Clarke: And our plan will reduce emissions by 80,000 tons more than the federal carbon plan and cost Manitobans \$260 million less.

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries New Board Appointments

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): We know that the former government interfered in our Crown corporations. Many were responsible for many poor financial decisions being made. Many of decisions affected Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, and our government is very proud of the hard work and the due diligence undertaken with the newly appointed board and the renewed corporation.

Can the Minister responsible for Liquor & Lotteries please update this House on the progress made to get Liquor & Lotteries back on track?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): I thank the member for Arthur-Virden for this very important question.

Madam Speaker, the previous board at Liquor & Lotteries undertook a \$75-million expansion with no supporting justification, no business case and no market assessment.

Conversely, our new government, in contrast, undertook a strategic review of this expansion with an eye towards fulfilling efficiencies, avoiding duplication and consolidating space. At the end of this review the board had decided a sale was the proper thing to do and sold the former Medical Arts Building, actually turning a profit of almost \$6 million.

Madam Speaker, we are proud of the accomplishments of our government and we will make sure the Crowns act on the behalf of all Manitobans.

Adverse Effects Agreement Flood Compensation for Norway House

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): As part of the adverse effects agreement between the Province, Manitoba Hydro and Norway House community council, the Manitoba government signed an advance agreement on January 15th, 2016. It's part of an overall compensation package for damage caused by flooding.

Norway House community council members met with the Minister for Indigenous and Northern Relations and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) on July 31st, 2016. They left with the—with every impression that this process was moving forward, but since then they haven't heard a word from this government.

Why has this government not responded to the community's concerns?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): Certainly, it's nice to see an interest in the Crowns and, clearly, I think we should—this is an important time to reflect on where Manitoba is at. And, certainly, Manitoba Hydro is at a bit of a crossroads in terms of the future and, certainly, what—the predicament that the previous government left Manitoba Hydro in, it's a shame, quite frankly, Madam Speaker.

Clearly, tough decisions have to be made at the board of Manitoba Hydro. We're going to be going through a rate review process and we look forward to that outcome through the Public Utilities Board process.

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

*(14:30)

Ms. Lathlin: Compensation for the people of Norway House includes much-needed land. The people of Norway House need land for housing, economic development and a cemetery. At such a critical time for the North, there's absolutely no reason to delay the completion of this nearly finished process.

Will this government commit to implement this agreement so the people of Norway House can grow their economy?

Mr. Cullen: And clearly our government is very proud of the consultations we've had with First Nations and Aboriginal communities. That's very important as we develop northern Manitoba, as we develop all of Manitoba, and certainly I know the individuals and the management in Manitoba Hydro have had a lot of discussions with individual communities in the North. Those discussions, those consultations and those projects will continue.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Norway House Community Council Mayor Christo Spiess and chief administrative officer Lloyd Flett are with us here today in the gallery. They and the community they represent want to know what this government is doing to resolve this issue.

Will the Premier and the minister for Northern and Indigenous Relations meet with them today to address their concerns?

Mr. Cullen: I will say from the outset that our government really believes in partnerships. We believe in positive partnerships, and we believe those positive partnerships will lead to prosperity for all Manitobans. That's why we're engaging in communities around Manitoba and particularly northern Manitoba.

We look forward to continuing with those—that dialogue and those conversations and ultimately to reach goals which will be in everyone's best interests.

Writing of the Throne Speech Private Sector Consultants

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, I just want to respond to that answer. The question was, will he meet with them? That would be a yes or a no, one or the other.

Madam Speaker, earlier this summer, the—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —the Pallister government put out an RFP, looking for proposals on economic development, many of which mysteriously found their way into the throne—last week's Throne Speech. This is a little strange, Madam Speaker, a little weird and a little unprecedented that a private sector consultant would actually write the Throne Speech.

So I want to ask the Minister of Finance: Why is the government outsourcing its critical decision making to private sector consultants?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for his question.

Of course, Madam Speaker, if he was truly listening to the Throne Speech he would've heard evidence that our government is on the right track: 16,000 new jobs year over year, one of the lowest unemployment rates in all of Canada. We have one of the lowest per capita household debt rates in the entire country.

There are more challenges ahead, but as that member references, we are definitely on the right track.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, I don't know why he would think I thought he was on the right track. He's clearly on the wrong track in almost every possible way.

Manitobans are asking for investments in their economy, and yet the Minister of Finance is allowing private sector consultants to write portions of the Throne Speech, and as I said earlier, that's unprecedented and, frankly, a little weird.

So I want to ask the Finance Minister: Does he want to govern at all here in Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I appreciate the question from the member and what seems to be a new-found interest in getting results or savings for Manitoba.

Now, of course, I could ask that member where was that desire to get value for money for 17 years when the NDP was in power and overspent their planned budget, let me guess, each and every year.

Madam Speaker, we have reduced the deficit by \$150 million. We have made important investments in the economy. We are helping families. We will take no lessons from that member on getting better value for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Allum: You know, the government's earning an interesting reputation. First, they freeload off of federal investments, they download responsibilities onto municipalities, and now they're off-loading critical decision making onto private sector consultants. It seems to us, in any event, that the government actually has no plan and no interest in governing on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

So, will the Finance Minister simply answer the question: Why did he have private sector consultants write the Throne Speech for him?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the member actually inadvertently helps us make our point, and that is that good governments make the tough decisions on behalf of those who elected them. Now, rather than make the tough decisions, what they did is raise taxes each and every time, double the debt and increase the deficit.

We take a different approach, an approach that is focused on getting better results for Manitobans. We are unideological in our views that way. We are proceeding in a manner that will get the best value. *[interjection]* And even when I say that, they laugh.

We're focused on the best value; they continue to laugh about the subject. It's no laughing matter to Manitobans.

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

Red River Valley Water Supply Project Government Position

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Well, Madam Speaker, all Manitobans are probably rightly concerned that their Throne Speech has been privatized.

Another thing they should all be very concerned about, especially if they live anywhere close to the Red River, is that this government has been completely and totally radio silent in their opposition or even opinion on the Red River Valley Water Supply Project in North Dakota. This could be incredibly devastating for any businesses, families, municipalities living anywhere along the Red River or Lake Winnipeg.

What is this government's position on that potentially dangerous project?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Acting Minister of Sustainable Development): I thank the member opposite for the question.

We've listened to a lot of grandstanding over the past 18 months on pretty well every issue, but the important fact, I think, that we have to evaluate is that the members opposite had 17 years, and they failed to meet every single one of their own targets. We will take no lessons.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: And I have a ruling for the House.

During private members' business on Tuesday, November 7th, 2017, the honourable member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) rose on a point of order addressing comments made by the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) during debate that morning. The member for Fort Richmond indicated that the member for St. Johns, and I quote, "said that I had used humour to dismiss the

seriousness of suicide," end of quote. The member for Fort Richmond rejected that interpretation of her remarks.

The member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) spoke to the point of order as well, stating that she felt it was inappropriate for the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) to have commented on the apparel of two female MLAs in the House. The Deputy Speaker took the matter under advisement.

In reviewing the Hansard transcript from that morning, I feel that some comments were misconstrued, which led to strong words being exchanged. I believe this to be a dispute over facts and opinions, and accordingly I would find that there is no point of order.

I would like to remind all members to be mindful of their words and actions in this place. It is clear to me that both members in this case hold strong feelings on the matter that was before the House, and this is entirely appropriate. What is not appropriate is for divergent opinions to lead to accusations and the exchange of harsh words.

I will leave the House with a quote from O'Brien and Bosc's House of Commons Procedures and Practice, page 594, which I believe to be instructive and worthy of your attention.

One of the guiding principles of parliamentary procedure is that debate and other proceedings in the House be conducted in terms of a free and civil discourse. Accordingly, the House has adopted rules of order and decorum governing the conduct of members towards each other and towards the institution as a whole. Members are expected to show respect for one another and for viewpoints differing from their own. Offensive or rude behaviour or language is not tolerated. Emotions are to be expressed verbally rather than acted out. Opinions are to be expressed with civility and freely without fear of punishment or reprisal.

* (14:40)

I thank members for their attention to these words and to this ruling.

PETITIONS

Corydon Primary Care Clinic and Misericordia Urgent Care Centre

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The current patients of the River Heights Corydon Primary Care Clinic located at 1001 Corydon Avenue and local residents are very concerned and dismayed with the plans to move and merge this incredibly important, centrally located clinic to Plaza Drive in St. Vital.

This clinic is valued for its accessibility, superb staff and quality service. Removing the clinic from this area will have a negative impact with serious, far-reaching, negative repercussions which would outweigh any theoretical monetary savings that may result from its relocation.

This clinic is on a major bus route, within walking distance for area residents and is easily accessible for the elderly, as there are many non-congested routes for Handi-Transit, care workers and taxi services to pick up and drop off patients.

The proposed Plaza Drive location in St. Vital has a lack of any direct or consistent access by public transportation, is typically compounded by massive, ever-present traffic congestion and will result in the payment of costly taxi fares for people on limited incomes.

This move combined with the closure of central Misericordia Urgent Care, which serviced the needs of downtown, Wolseley, River Heights, Fort Rouge, Spence neighbourhood and Polo Park, extremely downgrades access to the health-care system in areas populated by many seniors and others with limited means.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to cancel plans to close the Corydon Primary Care Clinic.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reopen the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre.

Signed by Bob Lower, Michaelin Lower, Elise Swerhone and many, many others.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Would you resume debate on the Speech from the Throne?

THRONE SPEECH (Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the motion of the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon, who has eight minutes remaining.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, eight minutes is hardly long enough for me to tell you everything that's wrong with this Throne Speech and with what this government has done to date in its mandate.

We talked, last time I spoke on this, about issues in the North. They talk about reducing wait times. How about the wait times that you would need to get in to see a doctor in northern Manitoba? How does three months—three months just to get to see a doctor in the clinic, and why is that Madam Speaker?

Well, it would appear is that there's been some sort of cut in the number of doctors that are now available in Flin Flon. Well, there used to be five, now there's three. Apparently, that meets some magic formula that they have that complies with their budget.

There also needs to be, according to their magic formula, three nurse practitioners—one of which has now been assigned to home care and not available for general duty. There is one position vacant, and so I'm left to assume that the third position is also seconded to University College of the North for education purposes. So that leaves Flin Flon, in particular, which serves a large portion of northern Manitoba, including Cranberry Portage, possibly Pukatawagan, but it also takes in a goodly portion of people on the Saskatchewan side—as this government probably isn't aware, Flin Flon is a border town.

So while they haven't officially come out and said what the cuts are going to be to the northern regional health authority budget, we know that they've said there has to be six—well, or is it \$7 million cut from the budget?

So they talk about us fear mongering and, trust me, the people in Flin Flon and the people in the Northern Health Region are very fearful about what's going to be cut next from their budget. We're already seeing the nickel and diming people on northern transportation issues. When it comes to health care, we shudder to think what's going to be cut next.

We talked about the provision for seniors homes, well, particularly in Flin Flon, where constant review seems to be the answer because they don't have courage to say yes or no. The last conversation I had about the building of the Hemlock seniors complex was in September of this year, and still under review. Still under review seems to be the standard answer when they're afraid to say something has been cut, and that's clearly what's happening here, Madam Speaker.

So we're moving on. Let's talk about all the issues that this government fails to see what's happening in the North. We talk about transportation issues in the North. We know that this government has sat on their hands and remains silent about the Churchill rail issue, which is bad enough for the people of Churchill, but it also now affects people of The Pas, Thompson, Flin Flon and all those communities along the line as the private enterprise tries to get out of its obligations. And, while this government remains silent, the federal government has at least said something, very little, but something.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So we move along, you know, and what was in the Throne Speech for the North? Did they talk about a northern job strategy? Did they talk about the known 1,500 impending job losses that are going to happen throughout Flin Flon, Thompson and other points in the North? Well, no. As a matter of fact, they did not. They failed to have any kind of job strategy. They do continue to rely on their Look North, which so far—I mean, a lot of people have put time and effort. A lot of people that truly believe that there could be, can be and will be something in the North, put that effort into this Look North program. Unfortunately, this government doesn't really seem to have the same commitment. They don't really seem to have a plan for the North, nor do they appear to be, in any way, shape or form, interested in developing one.

They've talked about tourism. Well, if you're going to have tourism, you need infrastructure. You need to have cell service. I don't know,

Madam Assistant Speaker, if many people in the province travel nowadays without cellphones, without—well, we know some people, of course, travel without cellphones; I should stand corrected on that.

However, if you were travelling north of Thompson, Manitoba—which, for the members opposite benefit, that is in northern Manitoba—if you were travelling north of Thompson, there is no cellphone coverage until, well, until nowhere, because, really, there is no cellphone coverage in Leaf Rapids, there's no cellphone coverage in Lynn Lake.

So those are things that this government should be doing to try and address those issues. If they truly believe that tourism is the answer for the North, then they should be starting to develop what the plan is to attract tourists to the North, and yet they remain silent. They remain silent on the roads. They remain silent on cellphone service. They remain silent on the high cost of Internet, that many of those northern communities rely on. If you went to some of the First Nations communities you would find that they have some kind of Internet service out of their band office, out of their health centre, but there's no such thing as Internet service to the members of those communities, unless they piggyback on those particular places that do have Internet, which then drives the cost of that up because, of course, they're not covered by MTS, which doesn't go into their communities—*[interjection]* Yes, somebody sold that—I wonder who that was—and continues to give it away. Again, they don't care about the people of the North.

* (14:50)

So, you know, we hear a lot of talk from this government about us fear mongering. Well, it's unfortunate, Madam Assistant Deputy Speaker, that everything we're afraid of seems to come to pass, seems that this government continues to cut front-line services, continues to cut things that particularly people in the North depend on, and we hear very little from this government about what their plans for the North are. We've heard lots in the media about Winnipeg and the negative impacts of the cuts that are happening in Winnipeg, but what about the rest of the province? What are these cuts doing to people in the rest of the province that really are held captive there, that don't have an option to go to the emergency room down the street because there is no other emergency room.

We need to have a government that's focused on all of the North that makes sure that developing good jobs, to make sure that developing education services is important for all of Manitoba.

The Acting Speaker (Sarah Guillemard): The member's time has expired.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): It gives me great pleasure today to respond to the Throne Speech that we enjoyed last week in this House.

Our Manitoba government is committed to forging a new relationship with our indigenous people and I'm very honoured to have had that opportunity in the past 19 months. For this government that means working with our indigenous partners positively and respectfully.

Since April 2016, various Cabinet members have been reaching out to our chiefs, grand chiefs, indigenous leaders and organizations serving the indigenous communities, and we are listening to their needs as well as their priorities.

In just over a year Cabinet ministers have had face-to-face meetings with 50 First Nation chiefs-in-council in addition to meeting with grand chiefs and representatives of SCO, MKO and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, as well as the president and Cabinet ministers from the Manitoba Metis Federation.

The department has led the development of the path to a reconciliation act, the first reconciliation legislation in Canada, an act that received royal assent on March 15th of 2016.

Through the department of indigenous and municipal relations, work is being done in preparation for the launch of a new major outreach strategy that will engage not only indigenous people, but Manitobans from all walks of life to help frame a comprehensive made-in-Manitoba vision for reconciliation. We're working closely with chiefs and First Nation leaders at every stage of development of this strategy.

Input from this outreach strategy will inform a new whole of government reconciliation framework for advancing indigenous priorities and continuing action related to the calls of action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Manitoba remains committed to establishing a renewed and strengthened duty-to-consult framework to replace Manitoba's current interim

framework which has been in place since about 2009. Manitoba's renewed framework will ensure that through the Crown consultation process indigenous rights are protected and that their communities have greater opportunities to participate in and benefit from resource development projects.

Manitoba is engaged with indigenous communities to hear their views on Manitoba's consultation process, and from them we're hearing that this is the first time that they have actually really felt engaged with a government. Most recent engagement sessions have been held with MKO, the Southern Chiefs' Organization, as well as individual communities where such communities are not affiliated with either of those indigenous groups.

Further engagement has occurred with the Manitoba Metis Federation, a northern association of community councils.

Manitoba has also engaged with a number of additional stakeholder groups including the Mining Association of Manitoba, the northern sector council, the Business Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, Manitoba Hydro, and Manitoba Prospectors and Developers Association, the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Prospectors and Developers Association as well as the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce.

We are working with the Association of Manitoba Chiefs on the next phase of these consultations and we anticipate further unveiling further details in the coming months with further community consultations to be held once Manitoba's draft framework has been approved for distribution.

Our department is also very pleased to report that phase 1, the on-reserve portion of construction on Shoal Lake Road, is now complete. This was in the process for many, many years but never came to completion with the previous government.

The community benefited from various employment opportunities and economic benefits, and Chief Redsky 'indiclated' clearly that the 20 per cent employment from within their community and indigenous people actually was at 30 per cent, and they were very pleased about that. The Manitoba Metis Federation and Manitoba Infrastructure signed a consultation agreement in July 2017 and are actively engaged in a Crown consultation process. Shoal Lake 39 has recently signed the consultation agreement and municipal—or pardon me, Manitoba Infrastructure has signed on

behalf of Manitoba. phase 2, the off-reserve portion of construction, has gone to tender and is open from bids from all interested parties.

In regards to the Lake St. Martin channel projects, Manitoba is currently engaged in a consultation process related to this project, which 'inla' both—which involves both engagement and Crown consultation efforts. As of July 2017, one funding agreement to facilitate Crown consultations is being prepared and signed to be funded through municipal—pardon me, Manitoba Infrastructure capital.

Manitoba continues its engagement with potentially impacted communities to develop consultation work, plans and budgets, currently with six other communities and two communities on Lake Winnipeg. Final letters are being prepared for the remaining communities. We remain committed to municipal partners as well as our indigenous communities working together.

Operation Return Home and the comprehensive settlement agreements—we're very pleased—Little Saskatchewan First Nation, Lake St. Martin First Nation, Pinaymootang First Nation, Dauphin River First Nation and addressing the impacts of the catastrophic 2011 flooding are moving forward.

Manitoba is implementing all of Manitoba's commitments under agreed-upon federal or provincial term sheets which outsigns cost-sharing agreements between indigenous and municipal relations, as well as the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada for housing as well as community infrastructure.

Each of the four nations have signed the agreement in principle as a basis for a comprehensive settlement agreement. The non-binding agreements identify the full settlement package and guide development of the CSA document. Settlement components include housing, infrastructure, land and financial contributions towards community economic development. The parties have agreed on and Manitoba has tabled an offer for individual settlements with respect to the Anderson class action lawsuit, and the settlement is now awaiting court certification.

CSA drafts were provided to Little Saskatchewan and Dauphin River on June 14th, 2017. IMR as well as INAC and respectively local councils continue to work with the First Nations towards a sign-off. CSA drafts are proposed for

Lake St. Martin and Pinaymootang, and once all parties sign off on the CSA, a six-to-twelve week ratification process must take place.

In regards to these communities returning home, I'd like to update this House. In regards to Little Saskatchewan First Nation, the first phase evacuees began their returning home process this summer to 77 new houses in the community, and all evacuees are expected to be home by April of 2018. Dauphin River First Nations, all housing and infrastructure to be complete for evacuee return December 2017. Lake St. Martin First Nations, the first 30 families were moved into homes this past November with a minimum of 190 homes to be ready for occupation in just two more months.

It's interesting to note that the previous Manitoba government couldn't or wouldn't get this done any sooner, and these people have been displaced for many years.

Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson Twitter on November 3rd, 2017, indicated that Pinaymootang, there are remaining three evacuees to be in new housing by December 2017. This has come forward very quickly under this new government.

* (15:00)

We're pleased to be working with our First Nations in regards to treaty land entitlement, and the Manitoba government recognize the importance of 'expediating' the TLE process to ensure that entitlement First Nations can receive the land owed to them through this treaty process.

Since taking office in 2016 of May, government has approved, through the order of council, 42 parcels of land requested by the federal government, for a total over 53,000 acres of crowned and/or acquisition land. Canada has converted 20 of these parcels to reserve status for approximately 13,825 acres of crowned and/or acquisition land, and the remaining 21 'percels', which equates to 38,145 acres, are pending reserve creation by Canada.

We also recently settled an historic land claim for the forced location of the Sayisi Dene and transferred 13,000 acres of creation of new reserve land. These communities are asking our government how we could have completed these so quickly when a lot of these negotiations have been ongoing for nearly 20 years in some cases.

In our first four months of 2017-18, Canada has created over 17,000 acres of reserve lands in Manitoba. This is an improvement over the previous year, where approximately 6,800 acres of reserve land were created. Manitoba recognizes the important of these lands for the entitlement First Nations as providing a basis for significant economic as well as employment opportunities.

There are a number of issues that can impact that TLE process, which include the resolution of various third-party interests, municipal development and service agreements, easement agreements on certain sections and the duty to consult by Canada. As well, there are entitlement First Nations that have not signed their individual treaty entitlement agreements due to unresolved issues with the federal government. Manitoba will continue to focus on working with Canada and the entitlement First Nations to 'expediate' that land selected under the TLE process for the use and benefit of entitlement First Nations.

Our government's very pleased to be working with many First Nations groups, and we have prioritized the transfer, growth and development of urban indigenous economic-development zones that create lasting economic benefit for our First Nations. Three such zones have been created since April 2016, with more in progress, and we are very pleased to be working with all of these municipalities and First Nations to further these developments.

The Manitoba government recognizes that one level of government cannot alone achieve reconciliation. All levels of government and all Manitobans have a role to play. At every gathering of the Manitoba Association of Municipalities, the minister of indigenous and municipal relations, in 2017, has taken the opportunity to encourage all mayors and councillors to reach out to their indigenous neighbours and find opportunity for new collaborations and partnerships. And I was very pleased to meet this morning, in Brandon, with two more municipalities that look forward to working with their indigenous neighbours.

Examples of developed or 'emerging' partnerships include a strong partnership of the Swan Lake urban reserve, in Headingly; a new collaboration on infrastructure and local services between the RM of Clanwilliam-Erickson and the Rolling River First Nation; and efforts to expand a major water project worth almost \$13 million so that Waywayseecappo First Nation and Gambler First

Nation have the opportunity to link with the new Russel-Binscarth-Rosburn system.

Late last year, for the first time, regional grand chiefs were invited to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' annual general meeting with representative from all of the 137 municipalities. The gala dinner began with the acknowledgement of Treaty 1 territory, opening remarks from a former grand chief, Terry Nelson, and a First Nation elder's prayer. And I'm pleased to share with my colleagues here today that we will have several more chiefs attending that gala and joining with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities tomorrow night. We look forward to more of these strong partnerships between our indigenous communities as well as our municipalities in the coming year.

Following extensive input from communities all across northern Manitoba, the Look North Economic Task Force presented its report and action plan to government to help advance economic 'growth' and prosperity in the northern region. And one of our first priorities since forming government has been to work with northerners to unlock the economic potential that we know that region holds. Our government understands the importance of partnerships with indigenous communities to achieve the immediate and long-term goals that are set out in the action plan.

The foundation of economic development in the North must be built on stronger engagement with our indigenous communities, which was a prevailing theme during the Northern Economic Summit and its—in this report. The Look North action plan supports our government commitment to advancing reconciliation through mutually respectful relationships between the Crown and indigenous people.

Indigenous education has been, and it continues to be, a priority of Manitoba Education and Training with the department committed to adopting in a unified, co-ordinated approach that will be embodied in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework. The department is preparing a detailed legislative proposal to embed the framework in legislation through The Education Administration Amendment Act, but this will need to be weighed against other legislation that the government is looking to introduce.

And I was very pleased in the past weeks to attend not one but two graduation classes in Sandy Bay First Nation, the first one being all female, a group of 14 women that took the meat-cutting course

that was offered right on Sandy Bay First Nation. They were a very excited bunch of women and they were very pleased to have employment with HyLife in Neepawa. Well, I attended the second one just a couple of weeks ago, and they were a very enthusiastic group of young individuals. And it was so great to sit with the—their educator from Assiniboine Community College. And they referred to the one student as 26 and he thought this was quite humorous, and he explained to me that this young individual after a 14-week course could cut up a complete side of pork in 26 minutes. Now, the instructor had been not only teaching this course, but was, of course, very talented in this trade, and what really shone and stood out with him was that he as the instructor could do it in 25 seconds—or 25 minutes. It only took that new student one minute longer, and he was so impressed by that. He was further impressed that some of these individuals from Sandy Bay First Nation were actually leaving the following week from their community, going to Winkler and were going to be employed with Winkler Meats, and the other portion of the group were going to be employed, again, at HyLife.

But it just shows the potential of our indigenous youth and the need for training and education, and this government is committed to that. And it doesn't matter if they're in the southern part of the province, the northern part of the province, we all know that education is a 'priority' and we will be working as colleagues to ensure that these needs are met throughout the province.

We'd like to talk just a little bit about the Manitoba customary-care legislation because we know it's so important to our indigenous people. Customary care is a—community defined and is based on the unique laws, customs and traditions of our indigenous communities. In general terms, customary care is a mechanism that ensures indigenous children are connected to their families, community cultures and their values. It recognizes the collaborative responsibility of the community to plan for the placement and permanency. The proposed amendment would provide for a spectrum of customary-care supports and services from prevention to in- or out-of-home care. It would create better—create additional options for child welfare services and supports for the indigenous children and their families.

Customary care will be in addition to, not a replacement of, current CFS prevention and protection services and supports. The proposed

legislation would mean a shift to community-developed customary care, further developing the child and family services system while ensuring the safety of the child remains a paramount concern.

Through customary care, indigenous children would keep cultural ties with their identified community. It will also underscore and incorporate traditional family and cultural values. This will promote natural cultural resiliency and positive cultural identity through children's continued ties to their language, to their family, to their community and to their clan. And as our indigenous people have shared with us, those are very high priorities for them, and that makes it a high priority for this government as well.

Proposed amendments aim to reduce the number of children in care in Manitoba and support the declaration of principles in The Child and Family Services Act. Customary care would also divert court system costs and wait times through 'consensus' based care planning outside court systems.

*(15:10)

We have worked in great collaboration and partnership with families, organizations, our chiefs and grand chiefs and presented a united voice to the national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. And we met again just last week, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) and myself, with the coalition working on behalf of our Manitoba families, and we are committed to continue working together with the coalition as well as our grand chiefs and all of our families across the province of Manitoba.

We have asked the national inquiry to ensure that Manitoba gets fair time and that the number of families in Manitoba have the available time and support to continue with this inquiry and make sure that their stories are told. But we have also committed to the families to be with them during this journey, even beyond, and to work to find solutions going forward.

We will continue to advocate for necessary improvements to the inquiry and be more supportive and inclusive of all survivors and families throughout this process.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's a real honour and pleasure to once again rise in the Chamber to stand in support of the amendment put on the record here

and to support the amendment, while, at the same time, spend some time talking about the Throne Speech brought by this government and some of the glaring omissions that are evident, obviously, not just to us, Madam Speaker, but also to so many in Manitoba.

I did want to take an opportunity before I get to the substance of my speech, to take this opportunity, as it is a new beginning of a legislative session—although it feels very much like the old legislative session, I guess, in terms of timing.

But I did want to take the opportunity, as others have, to thank our table officers and the staff here in the Legislature. I do know that this has been a—*[interjection]* Absolutely. I do know that this has been a trying session and a continuation of the last session, in the sense that there have been some new elements added to the daily routines that we come to take for granted around here. And, although we know our tables—officers are very—and our clerks are very well versed in all of the rules, obviously, it challenges them every day to fully understand the implications of those rules and to execute them in a fair manner here in this House. And I believe that they've done that.

In that regard, I also want to take this opportunity to thank our House leaders. Both House leaders are brand new to this position and, as I said, they've come into a time when the circumstances have changed and the dynamics here in the House have changed and certain rules, which weren't always forefront in the past, are now becoming more evident. So I just wanted to, in particular, mention the Official Opposition House Leader, who has done an amazing job and I wanted to recognize that.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to thank my constituents, as I think I do every opportunity I have in this House. It is now getting towards the holiday season, and all MLAs in this House will certainly appreciate that it's a very busy time for community and for getting time with one's constituents, and I certainly enjoy that part of the job. And I appreciate the opportunity to listen, to learn from them and to get their feedback on some of the changes that are coming forward from this government.

And so, when my constituents ask me—you know, well, there's been a Throne Speech, and maybe they've heard some of the highlights—or lowlights, in this case, Madam Speaker—they ask me, what—you know, what are your takeaways from the

Throne Speech? What are your—what are the highlights that you see coming over the next year?

And, certainly, the Throne Speech is supposed to be a vision document of the government, and it's supposed to be a blueprint that lays out clearly what Manitobans can expect for the next year.

And so, in preparation for this speech and also to help me in responding to my constituents, I thought I maybe should go back and look at the 2016 Throne Speech and see exactly how many of the pledges and the promises that were laid out in that document, how many of those were implemented by this government and in what ways?

And so I started going back through this year, and I started sort of trying to think of the main highlights. If I went to ask my constituents today, and I said, what, could you tell me, what changes has this government made in the last year that affect you on a day-to-day basis? Well, I can tell you, being from the constituency of Concordia in the northeast part of this city, of course, the No. 1 concern that they would have is to say that our emergency room is being closed. And so, obviously, that would be, I would say, and obviously my community is just one of many that is being affected by the closures and the cuts across the health-care system in different parts of the city. This would be, if I had to ask constituents, I'm sure, from almost every part of this city, definitely, if not the province, they would say, cuts to health care are the No. 1 issue that this government has undertaken that affects them on a day-to-day basis.

So I went back. As I said, Madam Speaker, I went back to the 2016 Throne Speech. Now, in context, the Throne Speech was given in November of 2016—November. The cuts to the emergency rooms were announced in March—February, March? Mere months after the blueprint that the government laid out was tabled in this House—mere months—after this government laid out its priorities for the year. And so I went back and I looked for the paragraph, the page, the line, the word that said, we are going to decimate the health-care system in this province. Well, guess what? It wasn't there. In the blueprint of the government, it wasn't there.

So I ask constituents: What else is top of mind for you? Well, they say, tuition is going up; we hear tuition is going through the roof. Students have to pay more, you know. This is a concern for not only the students, as we've heard in this House and they've been very vocal, and we appreciate them making

sure that their voices are heard, as, you know, folks who we often talk about as not being as engaged in the political process, and yet they come to this Legislature and they make sure that their voice has been heard. And this government continues on.

So we ask about post-secondary education. Well, we look back and we look for an indication of this government that this is a priority. We don't see it. We talk about the funding for K to 12, which happens on a regular basis. Every January, this government—the government—whether it's this government or in the past—will lay out the funding that's given to school divisions for the upcoming year. This year, they were frozen—lowest levels in a generation. And so I went back to the 2016 Throne Speech, and I looked for that passage where I said, you know, maybe—I—and I could just imagine what the government might say just trying to use some of their language: you know, it's all about the bottom line; we're concerned about fiscal forecasts and outlook and so we're going to cut funding to K-to-12 education in this province. That would've been a blueprint. That would've been an indication to Manitobans of their path forward. So I looked back in the Throne Speech; it wasn't there.

So my point is, Madam Speaker, when constituents come to me and say, what do you think of this Throne Speech? Well, I can tell you and I will tell you what I think of this Throne Speech. But I also remind them that I actually don't know, because what's not in the Throne Speech is the part of the Throne Speech that most worries me. Because all the biggest changes that this government made last year, they told no one ahead of time. They consulted with no one. They never went to Manitobans, knocked on their doors, and said, you know, that promise we made about protecting front-line services? Whoop, out the door. We are cutting those services.

Occupational—you know, before I move on on this point, Madam Speaker, occupational and physiotherapy: a massive change in how we care and deliver health-care services for those who are undergoing surgeries in this province, a massive change. And was it announced in the Throne Speech? Certainly not. In fact, when this government made the sweeping changes, the cuts to the ERs and other changes, it wasn't even mentioned then.

* (15:20)

So this government has a pattern of not being transparent, not being open and not being up front with Manitobans about where they're going. So when we talk about the Throne Speech today, Madam

Speaker, I feel that we're at a bit of a disadvantage because this Premier (Mr. Pallister)—and I say this Premier, because—I—very well could be that I—for sure the backbenchers don't know what's coming. I can tell you for sure, because I know individual MLAs that wouldn't be in this place if they knew this is what they would have to sell to their constituents. They wouldn't have signed up for the job, and I—and who could blame them? But I would—I wonder even if the ministers know what's coming. Some days, I wonder.

And, you know, when you're asked, when you're told by the Premier to make these cuts, to cut deeply into the front-line services that Manitobans count on, you know, the ministers go ahead and they have to step out, I guess. They have to follow the lead and they have to do whatever the Premier tells them.

So we are concerned, Madam Speaker. We are concerned because this Throne Speech—we don't know what this government's actual agenda is. But what we can see in this Throne Speech also concerns us as well. As I said, cuts to health care have been the No. 1 priority of Manitobans. I look through the—this year's Throne Speech, and you might imagine that this would be—a good chunk of the Throne Speech would be talking about ways that they were rolling back some of their policies, listening to—actually listening to Manitobans and changing some of those policies, maybe even making decisions about individual projects that they now see the light of day on or services that they see the light of day on that now they want to make a priority. We don't see that. We don't see it. In fact, we just see that this government is pushing ahead, pushing forward without any consultation or without actually listening to Manitobans.

We see that this government continues to not prioritize education in this province, and as the new Education critic for our caucus I take real—I make special note of that. As I said, this has been a tough time for post-secondary education students. They saw over the course of the year that this government was pushing ahead on their plan to increase tuition. And yet what's also not always picked up on or not always emphasized is that at the same time that these costs are going up for individual students, for individuals in their—form of the tuition, the funding towards the institutions has been frozen. And this is going to have long, long-lasting effects on the way that universities are able to deliver services.

The other piece of that is, of course, that they are also being told to modify their programs to specifically fit with this government's agenda. And while I see there's a lot of benefit to making sure that students are being educated in a way that fits with the economy of tomorrow, and I think no one knows that better than students, and they've taken that on themselves to understand where those jobs will be and how they can train—become trained themselves, to ignore the other programs that don't fit into that nice, neat box and to underfund them really gives us pause and gives us pause and gives us concern, Madam Speaker.

You know, we—as it is a new legislative session, I will take this opportunity, as well, to recognize we have a new leader here on the opposition benches, and one of the priorities that I know our leader has emphasized is to go out and actually listen to Manitobans. And that's why it's—it was so encouraging to hear that while the government wouldn't take it upon themselves to actually come out to northeast Winnipeg to listen to Manitobans first-hand, to hear their concerns about the loss of service in their community—the closure of the emergency room at Concordia Hospital—I know our leader is willing to do that. And so I applaud him in that and I appreciate that he is willing to take the time to gather those stories, to listen and to base our policy going forward on those kinds of concerns. And that's really what the leader brought forward in terms of an alternative throne speech.

And so, while the, you know, the government, you know, brought forward a Throne Speech that probably doesn't tell the whole story, and the parts that it does tell are—continue to concern Manitobans, concern civil servants, concern those who feel that health care is a priority, the alternative throne speech begins to listen to their concerns and try to put them into policy.

So what I find very encouraging is to hear that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about a focus on the front line in health care with regards to delivery of service. The leader is talking about focusing on the upstream costs rather than the downstream costs where this government, you know, isn't even meeting the obligations in that regard, and just highlighting the fact that the—it's common sense to understand that you cannot cut your way to better health care, and I've heard the leader say that time and time again. And it's simply a reflection of what we're hearing on the doorsteps.

And I know every single member opposite who would knock on the door and say, do you feel that a cut to your health-care services will make you healthier, will keep your family healthier and safer, and even, if you wanted to take it a step further, which, you know—to focus on results that this government purports to do, you could say, you know, if we keep you healthier, if there's a way to keep you healthier in your home, would that not be a better result than simply focusing on downstream? And, again, this is common sense, I believe, type of stuff, that we're hearing directly from Manitobans, we're putting into policy. So I applaud the Leader of the Opposition for going out and listening to Manitobans.

The other area which has been a focus for this party—I would say it's the bedrock upon which we have built our movement—is been making sure that Manitobans have good jobs, that they have good jobs not only to support themselves and their families and—but also to feel that they are contributing to their society and contributing to this—the future of this province. That kind of engagement really builds a certain sense of well-being and of self-worth that I think translates not only into, again, into the job that somebody is doing but into how they interact with the—with other Manitobans and how they're able to contribute here in this province.

And so, when the Leader of the Opposition brought forward our alternative throne speech, we highlighted a jobs strategy, something that—again, this isn't something that is, you know, out there, is outside of the norm. You would think that this would be front and centre in a Throne Speech by this government, and yet they failed to include a job strategy and, at the same time, didn't even think to mention the situation in the North and the specific issues that are being faced in the North. And, in fact, didn't mention the town of Churchill at all by name, and so totally ignored the North and totally ignored the issues that are happening there.

I think it's encouraging when the Leader of the Opposition has gone out, not just talking to, you know, to labour, not just talking to people in the service sector as the—I think what the member from Morris was trying to say, maybe—*[interjection]* Right, so people in the service sector. I think the Leader of the Opposition has also taken the time to talk to business leaders, to talk to all individuals and just to carry on that tradition of the NDP in engaging the business sector, small business, talking to labour and having everybody at the table and getting the

best results for Manitobans by including everybody, not excluding and trying to demonize one side over the other or to antagonize one side over the other. So I'm encouraged by that.

And, of course, a focus on education and a focus on ensuring that those who are most marginalized in our society have the most opportunity to get engaged in the economy, to train themselves for the jobs of tomorrow and be contributors to this province. So I'm encouraged by that.

And last but not least, of course, Madam Speaker, a focus on the environment, and another example of practical solutions that have come directly from individuals, directly from the public. This is where conversations have resulted in policy, and a great plan where we can talk about how we can cut carbon emissions, we can help our environment. At the same time, we can support our Crown corporation in Manitoba Hydro, and we've talked about this for a very long time in our party. I know a former leader of our party was always talking about the potential of Hydro and the future of Hydro, and that's why the investment has been there.

* (15:30)

People are excited about the electrification of our—of vehicles and I think there's a real opportunity to bring that to the average person to allow them. And, you know, and there—just as a side note, just the other day a friend of mine bought the very first—what I understood to be the very first—Chevy Bolt in this province, and Chevy Bolt is a great example of how cars are getting cheaper, more accessible, and also their range is increasing and their ability to fit into the existing infrastructure is increasing.

So, all that to say, Madam Speaker, I'm encouraged that through listening to Manitobans in a real comprehensive way, we are able to bring forward an alternative Throne Speech that really speaks to the concerns of Manitobans, speaks to the overall health of Manitobans and education, speaks to the future of this province in a way that, I think, Manitobans are starting to miss.

You know, our leader talks often about how Manitobans are a fair-minded people. They did give this government an opportunity to show their true colours. They have now done that, and I think Manitobans are rejecting this government's move towards austerity and away from people and onto simply the bottom line.

We will always stand with people, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to address the Throne Speech and see where we can go in this direction. You know, I listen to people in the House here every day and I'm always interested to hear from the opposition because, you know, they tell us, well, we should consult more. So we go and consult and we have some of the biggest consultations in Manitoba history on the budget.

And then they say but, no, we didn't mean that type of consultation, even though it's above whatever was done in the past. They mean maybe just speaking to the opposition. Those are the people we should consult. But, no, we're consulting with Manitobans, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. So, you know, I think it's important to know that we're listening to people all across the province.

And the other thing I often hear from the opposition is, you know, health care is an issue, and we all know it's an issue, and we hear from constituents and Manitobans all the time about health care. But to listen to the opposition, don't make any changes. The opposition is happy with eight-hour wait times in emergency rooms, apparently. That's what they think is good health care. We know that Manitobans don't accept that and we're doing better, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker.

So I'm enthused to see that the changes that we've—we're making to health care are showing signs of fruition, early signs nonetheless, but we're going in the right direction. We are being bold and we know that that is going to be a challenge and it is a challenge, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker.

So, you know, when I've gone out and consulted with people in the early parts of my career or when I was a student, I do remember a lot of them giving me some very good advice, and one of those pieces of advice was be bold, and we are being bold in our throne speeches and budgets, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, because we know that what happened in the past didn't work. And, yes, we listened to people all across the province and even, surprise, surprise, other provinces, other countries, because we want to see how things are done well and we want to bring some of those things to Manitoba to improve the life of Manitobans.

I listen to people talk about the economy of tomorrow and educating for the economy of tomorrow, and well, what is it going to be? We don't

know, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. We can make some forecasts; we can listen to people all around the world. We can see what companies are doing and what the cutting edge is, and some of those things we can probably hit. You know, I think of growing up with our family and the four children that we're fortunate to have and sitting and—you know, one of the things that I enjoyed watching with our children was the Charlie Brown specials, especially at Christmastime that we know is coming soon, and I was always interested how you saw the adults in those programs. You would hear this—wa, wa, wa, wa—droning that would be going on and the adults weren't a big part of that, but the children had such intriguing minds.

So, you know, now I look at—at our—what our oldest daughter and her husband that farm a large amount of acreage in Manitoba and they use a drone on their farm. We never imagined that that would be something that would happen. That was what the parents said in Charlie Brown. That was their words, the drones that went on and on. But now they're using a drone not only to look at the crops and see how they're responding to nutrients and look out—what they're being attacked on—attacked by pests, but they're also using that to forecast when those crops might be harvested. And we can see the technology advancing very rapidly, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker.

And, you know, I know that many of us in the Legislature here, when we're spending time with our children you might lie back in a nice green meadow and look up at the clouds and talk to your children about what they see in the clouds, what the shapes are, and yet now I have—we have a—very fortunate to have a son to work in the technology area. He works in cloud computing. A few years ago that didn't exist. So we need to know, be ahead of the game in some of these forecasting, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, and figure out how that's got to be.

You know, another daughter, she's able to work in Toronto, in Calgary, in the forefront of her industry in designing commercial designs and working with people online in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the world that, again, those things didn't happen several years ago.

And yet the last one, again, is working on his—he's being a paramedic and wrote the exam here just last week, and he said he thinks he did well, but he'll find out in a few months and then we'll know if he's able to go and work in that environment. But the

things—think of the things that paramedics are doing today and that we are depending on in our health-care changes, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. They will be a big part of those changes because their early intervention is critical for the health of Manitobans.

And one of the more important things I think we saw in the Throne Speech was the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan that came out. And I was very fortunate to spend time with our Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) in Brandon last Friday in some of her consultations with people that came to tell us about what they saw in this plan and what other changes we could make, and I was struck by the response by many of those people in this—in the room. They were not necessarily supporters of a Conservative government. They may have been supporters of an NDP government, but they were struck on how we're moving ahead on climate. They were struck on how the failure was in the last 17 years of any plan from the NDP; targets would come out, targets would go by, targets would be missed. They'd fly to Paris. They wouldn't buy carbon offsets, you know, but they'd go and listen to the people in Paris about things the way they should be, and then they'd come back and not do anything.

So we're actually doing something, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, and the water pillar is a critical point for Manitoba. We drain most of the water from the Rockies, from the northern states—comes through Manitoba—and we have to deal with that water. Sometimes it creates floods. Sometimes we are working with droughts and we need to use the water in a different way. But this plan will enable producers to be a big part of that plan, and we will have a better response in how we deal with those things, paying farmers perhaps through the ALUS and GROW program to hold water on their land instead of having it flood other people. It's very ambitious and it—I think what one of the people in that consultation on Friday says, you know what, the time for pointing fingers is over.

We are all a part of this. We all contribute to changes in the environment and we can all contribute to making a difference. And I think that's probably the shocking thing to the opposition is that we are making a difference. It's easy to blame. We could have sat back and we could have blamed other provinces that are bigger contributors or other countries that are bigger contributors than we are. But, no, we're taking this bull by the horns, if you want to say that, I know the—some of the members

here are involved in agriculture and we're going to make a difference with this plan.

And on the personal basis this is very important, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, that people can know that they can make a difference. I mean, even in my own circumstances I now drive a vehicle that's a year old and it gets 50 per cent better gas mileage than the vehicle I drove a year ago. That's a dramatic increase. I suspect the next vehicle that I purchase, whenever that's going to be, will get even better gas mileage or perhaps down the road it will be an alternative-fuel vehicle, that that will be something that has come to the mainstream. We're working on those—all those types of things.

*(15:40)

In our own environment we've removed a wood-burning fireplace. Those particulate emissions no longer go out into the atmosphere. We switched from a gas hot-water tank to an electric hot-water tank—again, those changes to the environment. We had a consideration for a gas stove. This was something that if you're a cook, you know that gas stoves are the best thing to cook on. Well, when you look at all the planning was in there to install one of those, and we went through all of the possible permits that were needed, and at the end, we decided that that was not something—not the road we were going to go down, that electric's still the way to go, because that's what we produce in Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker. And those are choices that individuals can make. They can make a difference. And we want to make sure that all Manitobans are a part of that.

Agriculture, of course, is a big part of my family business, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, and we've been working with precision agriculture for over 20 years, spending a lot of money on it, trying to find the way that that fits, and it does fit. It enables not only nutrients to be in the place where they are best for the crop, but it enables the nutrients to be applied in a sustainable manner so they are there for what the crop needs and not overapplied, same with pesticides.

You know, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I've been at most of the research facilities—in fact, I think probably all of them, of the major companies that produce seed, produce pesticides for North America and for the world, seen what they've been doing in research in terms of how we're going to be growing new crops, what those crops will be, and the changes that they're making in the crops to make them better, better for uptake, and reduce the use of pesticides

and, of course, change the mix and what you're using for nutrients. We've seen a dramatic 'uptame'-uptake, in Manitoba, in soybean production, and I'm sure many of us hopefully know that soybeans fix their nitrogen; you don't have to apply nitrogen for those crops. So, again, a reduction in inputs. And those are all things that we're changing to the mix. With the announcement of the pea processing plant in Portage, great to see these world-class plants coming to Manitoba. Again, peas are a—similar to soybeans in that they fix their nitrogen. So a change in the cropping mix there is happening all the time.

You know, I look at agriculture. It is one of the most intensive users of technology in the world. With all the remote sensing that is going on now, there's going to come a point in time where you may be controlling the operation on your field from your office. In fact, most of the tractor cabs and the combine cabs now are mobile ops, as you have full interaction with all types of technology to know what's going on. In terms of the application and the yield, there's—with precision agriculture, there's yield maps, there's field maps. We know where the nutrients need to be applied in what parts of the field to get better return, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. So it's all something that I have seen dramatic changes in the last several years, and those are just continuing at a faster and faster pace. So, again, individuals can make a difference, and they will make a difference.

You know, one of the things that I guess I also saw in the Throne Speech is—was a mention of Brandon West and the MLA from Brandon West. Oh, I guess—can I say that's who I am? I don't know. I think I can. And, of course, an all-party committee or task force to improve the rates of organ and tissue donation. So you're not going to call me on that, so I guess I'm okay to say that, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. But it is something that we've been charged with, and unlike some others in the Chamber in their expectations of us, this committee will look at as many options as possible on how to improve those rates. We know that Manitoba is not the most successful in some areas and they are in others. We have a very active transplant group in Manitoba, and I've been in communication with them for many years, as I'm sure you know, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. Well before I was first elected to the Legislature, was unfortunately a part of my life to be—to meet these significant individuals with the illness of one of our daughters.

I can't say enough about the work that they do and many others that I have met along the way and the opportunities that I've gotten to meet many of these people, not just in transplant but people that have come to me over the last two or three weeks as they learned that we're going to have this committee with lived experience. Individuals in the Legislature here have been getting many emails and phone calls from people that want to help, that want to see how we can make this better. And we want to keep—you know, look at the several opportunities that there are to make this a better type of system.

One of the things that I was present for just after I was elected, then-Health minister Theresa Oswald launched the signupforlife.ca website, and I went to the library to see that. Wasn't necessarily invited as an—as an opposition member, but it was open to the public, so I went to listen to what it was about, and I think it's a great step, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. It is a step that I thought would be—make a great difference in how Manitobans choose to be an organ or tissue donor, but, unfortunately, it—with some of the things that happened in the previous government, it seemed to lose some of its steam, there were some other things that were going on in the caucus, I guess, and that minister was no longer part of the government. So things happen, and, you know, now I see that that website is still there.

We had a launch just last week, again, with IBAM and with the insurance brokers to have all the cards in their agencies so that they can work with Manitobans to draw attention to the website so that Manitobans again will look at signing up for life and consenting to be organ and tissue donors, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's very important in that that they have discussions with their loved ones, because it's not much—you know, to make that decision for yourself, doesn't always work if your loved ones don't know what your wishes are so that when you do come to the end of life and some of those decisions have to be made with the family, they are more prepared for it. So we want to make sure that that is available for people to get to.

So I have just been struck by the number of people that have contacted me and colleagues about this committee or task force, wanting to help, giving lots of information and knowledge, wanting to be part of public presentations, especially on the professional side, from all parts of the experience, whether it be looking at people from the cornea side or eye tissue, and how we can use those in a better

format, to breaking down some of the silos that now exist to make sure that things work a little bit better.

When I first was exposed to the transplant world many years ago, unfortunately, I tried to get in contact with some MPs, and other legislative officials, and especially the national members of Parliament because they were the ones that weren't doing anything about a national organ or a tissue donor registry and I wanted to draw their attention to this, and I did not get a lot of uptake, in fact, none, on that. So it's become a bit of a cause for me. It is not something that drives my entire legislative calendar, but it's always been an important part, and I see now that this particular committee will help to build our organ and tissue donor list and the number of transplants we do, not just in Manitoba, but throughout Canada, because we don't—can't do all the transplants here. And, you know, our cause was a little—our own family experience was different because we had living donors that were available, and I was struck in a very—of an emotional way by the way the members, not only of our immediate family, but also our extended family and good friends, that came forward to offer to be tested as a possible living donor. But not everybody, of course, has that opportunity of people that are in their families or extended friendship list that can be a living donor.

And, of course, some of the particular organs don't lend themselves very well to—I think that a heart would be probably pretty much impossible at this point. So those are things that you cannot do with a living donor, Mr.—Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, obviously. But those are things that we need to bring people's attention to. We need to improve the knowledge base out there because even when I'm talking to very learned individuals about how our whole process works, there is a lack of knowledge from those individuals on how an organ and tissue transplant takes place, where it happens, what organs and tissues are available and how you go about being part of that process, even to the length of time that they can be maintained and transported, how that transport happens, who makes the decisions, and, of course, the family involvement is a critical part and is something that we do need to make sure.

* (15:50)

We want to engage all members of the public that have the 'availability'—ability for this. I have spoken to some of the elders in First Nations, and we want to

make sure they're part of this discussion. Of course, are other groups that we need to talk to—we look at, even last week, where we had the Jewish Federation in here with their display in the lobby. They came up to me and talked to me about how it works in the Jewish religion in terms of this and recommended I speak to one of their rabbis about it, so we could go through those types of things.

We want to make sure, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, that people are on the same page, because it is a very personal decision, regardless of where you come from in a cultural intent or a religious intent or how you would approach this type of decision. It's a very personal and it is necessary to have the family involved in that.

So thank you, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity. I think this is a bold plan that we have put in front of Manitobans and I'm sure we will see some very good outcomes in the climate change. The plan there is just—I'm struck by how much of a difference we can make for the world. Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It's an honour to stand in support of the amendments to the Speech from the Throne, which were put forward last week by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith). It was certainly a privilege to hear her first major speech in this House, and I know that she's going to be a tremendous colleague and a tremendous member of the Legislature for a fascinating part of our province, being Point Douglas.

There are many things, obviously, that disappointed our opposition NDP caucus about the Speech from the Throne, mainly because it outlines—well, I guess I'll call it a course of action, because I don't think we can call it a plan, I don't think we can call it a vision. Some might say it was more of a course of inaction, but there was nothing in there which gave us satisfaction that this government's moving in the right direction. And, in fact, I'm afraid that we are reminded, once again, by this Speech from the Throne, that this government is making life harder for many, many Manitobans, and their course of action is being celebrated by very, very few.

Now, I could spend all my time, probably, that I have, just talking about the impact on the people I represent in the West End. Like many of my colleagues, we have more things we want to talk about than we have time to do.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So I'm just going to touch on a couple before I move on to the main part of my speech, which is talking about the lack of any real vision when it comes to health care in Manitoba.

I do want to speak first about the government's choices on funding transit and the impact that's having on people, the kind of people I represent in this Legislature. Bill 36, which was passed in the wee hours just a couple of weeks ago, Madam Speaker, removed a provision of law which has provided for decades now the equal sharing of the operating costs of municipal transit systems between the Province and municipalities.

And what was probably one of the most frustrating parts of the entire debate, or lack of debate, was that there were people, including people in my community, that wanted to come down and present on Bill 36, and despite us raising it in the House in question period, despite people asking for the opportunity to present, this government, which purports to be all about listening and purports to be all about consultation, shut out those Manitobans who wanted to come down and speak about Bill 36, to speak about the importance of functional transit and were denied that ability by this government.

And, of course, the government refused to listen. The bill passed in the early hours, as I've said, and now, not surprisingly, we have a city which is looking to try to make up lost revenue they were counting on.

The mayor, Mayor Bowman, has now gone ahead and said that it's his intention to pass a budget which is going to increase Winnipeg Transit fares by 25 cents per ride, which would result in about \$10 increase in a monthly bus pass, close to a 10 per cent increase for Winnipeggers who take the bus. And, on top of that, the mayor has said there will be service reductions for dozens and dozens of routes across the city of Winnipeg.

People in my neck of the woods take the bus, Madam Speaker. They use it to get to high school, to Red River College, to the University of Winnipeg, to the University of Manitoba. They need the bus to get to medical appointments, they need the bus to go shopping, they need the bus to go to work. And, although some people in the West End will tell you, yes, they are taking the bus by choice, because they believe it's a green option, there are many, many others who take the bus because of necessity, because they don't have a car or they can't afford to drive a car or park a car where they're wanting to go.

And, you know, my daughter, of course, is out at the University of Manitoba. She takes the 36, the Northwest Super Express, it's called. It starts in The Maples and runs through the North End, the West End, Wolseley, Fort Rouge, and gets kids out to the university pretty quickly. She tells me, by the time she gets on the bus there is rarely a seat available. Sometimes, actually, the bus is so full that no matter what the weather is, that bus just goes flying by when she's standing waiting at the bus stop.

My daughter's experience is not a unique one, and that's what we've heard. I am hoping that buses like the 36 that takes students on their U-pass out to university is not going to be affected by these cuts because that would make it more difficult for young people to get to school on time to pursue their education.

And, you know, my other daughter, this Wednesday, she'll be over at the University of Winnipeg for future student night. Her plan is to either go to the U of W or U of M. She'll also be using public transit, which makes our household not special; it makes our household much like so many other households across the city who are now worried about what the future of transit is going to look like with a provincial government that is not interested.

And I do feel especially bad for students, right, who've seen that their earnings, if they happen to be earning minimum wage, were frozen last year. They've now been locked in at no more than the rate of inflation. We already know, because we talked about it last session, that now their tuition next fall could rise by inflation plus 5 per cent, maybe in the range of 7 per cent total. Now they see their bus costs to get to and from school going up by 10 per cent.

I'm hoping City Council will find a way to avoid these fare hikes and these service cuts, but they are quite right to put the blame squarely where it belongs, which is on this provincial government, which did away with something that worked well in this province for decades and decades.

And I know the outrage from some of the members of the Conservative caucus when one of these city councillors actually posted a picture showing a transit bus saying, well, here's how you can call the Premier (Mr. Pallister), here's how you can email the Premier. I suppose the only quibble I would have with that is that we know emailing the Premier isn't necessarily that valuable. Perhaps they

should have put the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) wife's email address on the meme and that might have got some attention.

But I have seen some of the responses from the Conservative members which, frankly, are not doing their political party any favours.

I also want to talk briefly about an issue that, unfortunately, is rising again in the city of Winnipeg, and that's public safety. I know the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston) and I spent some time at a public meeting that was called by the city councillor for Daniel McIntyre ward in response to many people saying that they are concerned about the levels of crime, about people who are finding they get up in the morning and their car is gone or their car has been smashed, coming home to find that people have violated their homes and broken into their homes.

People are complaining about being robbed, and, of course, you always want to be careful not to make your response based on anecdotes and individual stories. But, when I heard about the number of people coming forward and complaining I decided to check the most recent numbers for crime stats, which is the statistics which are put up publicly by the City of Winnipeg Police Service, and, as I had to explain to the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), they do not represent every crime and they can be adjusted at the end of the year, but my experience as Justice minister is that whatever crimes that shows is very likely to be within a few percentage points of the overall crime rate in the city of Winnipeg.

And what does crime stat tell us from the first of January to the 25th of November? Well, it tells us that break and enters, residential break and enters in Daniel McIntyre ward, are up by 27 per cent over the previous year. It tells us the number of vehicles being stolen in the Daniel McIntyre ward are up 19 per cent over the previous year.

Even worse, commercial break and enters—up 59 per cent over the same period last year, and other break and enters—vehicles, sheds, other properties up a whopping 79 per cent over the year before.

So the end result is that, over the first almost 11 months of the year, people in the West End and Wolseley have actually had their crime going up by 26 percent, which is a shocking increase.

Why is that happening? Well, if you talk to the police, if you talk to members of the community, if you talk to people who work in addictions and

mental health, it's fuelled by an increase in harmful drugs that is fueling people's crime and, unfortunately, we have a government that is doing nothing about it.

* (16:00)

And perhaps the most telling was just the other day. It wasn't a question from the NDP. It was actually a question from the independent Liberal when the Premier made it clear in his answer he actually didn't know the difference between opioids and methamphetamines. And, if that's the low level of understanding, I suppose it's no surprise that we're seeing a great increase in crime that people are now trying to deal with, perhaps by forming patrols, perhaps, unfortunately, by installing cameras, by adding additional locks in their homes. That's not the way it should be, and that wasn't the way it was over the past decade as we took those issues seriously. But I suppose this government doesn't want to talk about those things, and that is a real shame for the people who are affected by crime.

Now, the—most of my comments I will reserve for the area of health care. Health care, of course, is the largest part of the provincial budget. I think it's fair to say any government coming into power would want to take a look at how things are done and would want to try to find ways that things could be improved. That's not unreasonable, but what is unreasonable is a Premier who's ignored the advice and ignored the warnings of health-care experts, a Premier that's ignored the concerns of health-care workers and a Premier that, unfortunately, has shown he's not interested in the needs of Manitoba families.

We hoped, perhaps in the Throne Speech, that there would be a signalling maybe of a trimming of the sails and maybe a bit of a change from what we've seen over the past year. We hoped that maybe the Premier would change his course, but instead he signalled that he intends to move forward with his biggest attack on health care in a generation in this province. The Premier had the chance, through the Throne Speech, to signal hope for our health-care system, but instead Manitobans are left with more fears of cuts, fears of less health care farther away from themselves and their loved ones, more costs to individual Manitobans and a worse health-care system and worse outcomes.

It was just—actually it was not even a week ago we had the Throne Speech, and Michelle Gawronsky who's the president of the MGEU, well, what did she say about the Throne Speech? She said, and I quote:

I think the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has missed an opportunity where he could have undone some of the cuts and what they're looking at and ensure that we have more services for Manitobans in health care rather than less. That wasn't done.

And I suppose for Manitobans who were looking to see something better in this Throne Speech, that was a great way to sum up the way they felt hearing this government speaking about health care. The changes which are now being rushed through without a plan and the lack of investments are more than unsettling; they're actually frightening to many Manitobans. We've been told as New Democrats, as we go back to our own communities, as we now hear from people that have Conservative MLAs whose complaints are falling on deaf ears, they tell us what we already know: you can't cut your way out of challenges that our health-care system faces.

We believe, as New Democrats, and we always have believed, that health care is an essential service that should be free and it should be accessible to everyone, and, by his actions, by his words and now by this latest Throne Speech, we see the Premier has abandoned his election promise, the promise he made to every Manitoban when he wanted their vote in the spring of 2016 to protect front-line services that families and seniors need.

And what do we see instead in the West End of Winnipeg? What do we see in the North, what do we see in other parts of Winnipeg and rural areas? We see that patient safety and the quality of our health-care system has been put at risk, as this Premier blindly follows the money and forgets to stand up for the people as he pursues his agenda of cuts to services.

Now, where to begin on the particulars? I'm going to begin, actually, with the Misericordia Health Centre urgent care centre. You know, I do have friends who are Conservatives. Maybe some people will be shocked by that, but it is the case. But they, probably more than any other group of friends, have said to me, you know, I just can't believe that this government closed urgent care at Misericordia, the facility with some of the best results across the health-care system, a facility with some of the shortest wait times and also a facility that has such a strong record of helping whoever may make it to their door. Whether they're—they live on Wellington Crescent and they're driving there or they're homeless and they're walking along the river to make their way to urgent care at Misericordia, this was a

facility that was providing a vital service to nearly 40,000 Manitobans a year, and now that urgent care centre is shuttered.

I know the government, through their advertising campaign, told people that it had shifted, that those services had shifted to urgent care at Victoria General Hospital. Well, I want this government to know that many of the people who were going to Misericordia have not shifted themselves onto a bus to ride all the way to Fort Richmond for health care. They are making their way to Health Sciences Centre, which is one of the reasons we're seeing more and more challenges on that front.

And now what do we see? Well, we've seen Victoria General Hospital close, and now, in the next year, in the lack of any suggestion otherwise in the Throne Speech, we're going to see the Concordia general hospital close its emergency ward and Seven Oaks General Hospital close its emergency ward. They are going to triple the pressure on existing emergency wards, which are going to increase wait times and weaken, not strengthen, weaken the quality of care.

Concordia alone serves 30,000 to 32,000 people a year. And as a nurse from Concordia said, you can just add those numbers to other facilities; you're going to have longer wait times. And, you know, we had a great debate the evening of committee on Bill 34, and we had health-care professionals from all across the province who came to talk, and there was one doctor who stood up; she said she was an emergency room doctor at a community hospital. And even though they tell you when you're in law school never ask the question unless you know what the answer is, I wanted to ask this doctor which hospital she worked at. And she looked back at me once she was recognized and she said, I'm at Concordia Hospital. Please save my emergency room. Don't close Concordia.

And I know the Health Minister—I hope he was listening. I hope the other members of the Conservative Party were listening to a doctor who took the time to come down to speak about something important to her but also knows in her heart and in her professional experience that keeping Concordia general hospital's emergency room open is the right thing.

And, you know, we've heard this Minister of Health. You know, he tells us that he stays up all night. I'm sure he does. He stays up all night with the Connected Care app, and he waits until the lowest

possible minute, and he takes a screenshot so he can come in and try and tell us how things are working better in the system. Because they're not. And, Madam Speaker, I can go on the app, which is on my phone, which will generally show you, whatever time of day, you're going to wait five hours or more at Concordia general hospital. You're going to wait four hours or more at Seven Oaks, four hours or more at Victoria General Hospital and three to four hours at Health Sciences Centre or St. Boniface general hospital, maybe even longer at the Grace.

We know the minister has directed his staff and he's directed the health-care authority to try and pick and choose and change the way that they're calculating these numbers because we know from people that we're speaking to, we know from people working in the system, that things are getting better—or rather, things are getting worse; they are not getting better. Wait times are getting longer.

An Honourable Member: Oops.

Mr. Swan: Well, oops, say some members. And, yes, I wish we could just say oops about the poor decisions this government is making. But for Manitobans and Winnipeggers, it's a lot more serious than that.

And these cuts, of course, are going to force families to travel further, an extra 15 to 20 minutes to get emergency health care, situations when minutes matter in an emergency situation. My friend, the member from Concordia, has told us his own story. That is not a unique story. And as Health critic, I've actually been touched by the people that have been quite prepared to share their own experiences and share their own stories. And we've been inviting people to do that. And I'm very proud that our leader, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), has announced that we will be doing what this Progressive Conservative government is not doing and actually listening to real people with their real stories. And we'll be traveling around the province, and we'll be hearing from people in the inner city; we'll be hearing from people in the suburbs. We'll be going into areas with people that elected a Progressive Conservative MLA are now truly regretting that decision. We are going to hear from them, and we are going to continue to press this government to make changes, and if this government won't make those changes, we will be coming forward with our vision for what we are going to do when we are able to get back into power and protect the health-care system for the benefit of all

Manitobans because that's something we stand for as New Democrats and we will never back down from that challenge.

And, you know, we know about the way that this government has closed the door on seniors care. We know that long-term beds are necessary, yet this government is not interested in increasing those numbers. We know that personal-care-home beds are so important, and yet this government shows no interest at all in dealing with these challenges.

* (16:10)

And, in fact, what did we see? Well, we saw the cancellation of hundreds of personal-care-home beds that were slated for Transcona. We saw the cancellation of hundreds of personal-care-home beds that were slated for Lac du Bonnet, not only leaving those seniors out in the cold, but, frankly, frustrating communities that had actually raised and been able to put together millions of dollars, not by having huge benefactors writing big cheques but people showing up and buying tickets and going to dinners and coming up with their money, because they knew that these investments in health care were so important to seniors in their community and so very, very important.

Instead of building beds in communities that need them, of course, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), the best he can do is re-announce scaled-back, old commitments. We know that this government now has put up an artificial barrier, which is going to make it very difficult for any but the most wealthy communities in Manitoba to ever expect to build any new personal-care-home beds. And now the announcements are running out for this Health Minister.

The time is running out for this government. They are now going to be exposed for their failure to do anything, to invest anything to make health care better in Manitoba.

There's so many more things that I could say, Madam Speaker. My time runs short. I will be supporting these amendments, I will be voting against the Throne Speech—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I'd like to start off by thanking Madam Speaker and her staff, the pages that work here and also the staff from the Clerk's office. Having ran a number of committees over the last 18 months, I really appreciated the help

that I've received from them and the hard work that they do. So they do deserve a thank you, so I'd like to thank all the staff in the legislator, whether it be the Hansard staff, everybody. But all the staff does a supreme job, and I'd just like to make sure that they know that we appreciate all the work that they do.

It is an honour to be here today and put some words on record in regards to the great Throne Speech brought forward by our PC government last week and to the amendments brought forward by the opposition. This is the seventh Speech from the Throne that I've heard, and it is one of the best when it comes to the future of Manitoba. That is what a Throne Speech is—is what it should be. It is basically a blueprint for what the people of Manitoba can expect from their government over the next year.

Before I get into my speech, Madam Speaker, I would also like to clarify one thing. I feel that La Verendrye is the best constituency in Manitoba, even though a number of other MLAs have made that claim about their constituency. I know I have a lot of Manitobans from all around the province that spend a lot of time in La Verendrye. I mean, having Lake of the Woods, the Whiteshell, Sandilands Provincial Forest and many more destination areas, I think that if we did a vote or a poll on Manitobans and let them decide, La Verendrye would probably win.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the citizens of La Verendrye for electing me and giving me the honour of serving them. I have served them for six years, and I look forward to serving them for many more.

In April of 2016, Manitobans gave our government an overwhelming majority, a record 40 seats. We were given a mandate to fix the finances, repair the services and to rebuild the economy of this great province. Madam Speaker, that is one thing that I will agree with the member from St. Johns on, and that is that Manitoba is a great province, but the last NDP government left Manitoba in a state of disrepair. Seventeen years of NDP mismanagement has taken its toll on Manitoba.

Our government has inherited an unsustainable state of affairs, where our credit rating has been downgraded, our public assets have been allowed to deteriorate. Budget targets were missed year after year as deficits and debt kept growing, out-of-control spending by the former government. The size of our civil service kept growing compared to other provinces. Our rate of civil servants was one of the

highest in Canada's, and red tape and taxes were stifling private sector investment.

In the last 18 months while in this Chamber, all I hear from the opposition is: Spend more money, spend more money. They have not yet learned that that is what got them into the position they are in now: in opposition. A wise uncle of mine once told me: It's not about how much money you spend; it is about how you spend it. And the previous government never was good at smart spending.

We will not continue on the path of spend and tax like the previous government did. We are committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada, one that will focus on long-term, sustainable measures to fix our finances, repair the services that Manitobans rely on and rebuild our economy. That is what this Throne Speech is about. It is about the future of Manitoba.

Manitobans deserve better than to lag behind the rest of Canada in so many categories. The direction that Manitoba was going was not sustainable. Change was needed. But change is not always easy. Many people are afraid of change, and the opposition is using that. They're constantly fear mongering. Every day they are running around telling Manitobans that the sky is falling. Members opposite keep fear mongering Manitobans and telling them that the sky is falling. Well, Madam Speaker, the sky isn't falling. It's just the members opposite trying to scare Manitobans.

Members opposite said they care about Manitobans, but I think they care more about getting elected back into government than making Manitoba a better Manitoba. They had 17 years, and all they did was bring Manitoba down. It is time they started showing what they do—that they do care about Manitoba and working with us to make a better Manitoba.

We have accepted the challenge and will turn Manitoba in the right direction, and we have offered to let the opposition join with us and help us make Manitoba a better province, but, obviously, they are not interested in making Manitoba a better province because they will not side with anything that our government has come up with. They all want to do whatever it is on their own.

The previous government knew they were in trouble and spent millions of dollars on reports, but they did not have the fortitude or, as I like to say, the guts, to act on any of these reports. They were afraid

they may lose their jobs; it may cost them votes. So much for them saying they care for Manitobans. I sit here and listen to members opposite chirp about the debt and deficit and how we, as government, now own it. They say that it is now our problem. Well, Madam Speaker, it is interesting in the way they talk about it. They know it is a problem. They know it was done on their watch because they are so willing to pass the problem on. So, obviously, it is a problem. But yet they are not willing to help fix the problem.

Madam Speaker, that is what our government is going to do. We are going to fix the problems that were created by the NDP. We are going to fix the finances of this great province. That is what this Throne Speech is about.

* (16:20)

Madam Speaker, sitting here, I get to listen to some of the nonsense that members opposite have to say. Just the other day, the Leader of the Opposition was talking about the increase in hydro rates and how they were happening on our government's watch. I need to comment on this because, before the election of 2016, Hydro had already said that hydro rates would have to double in the next 10 years. This was all the fault of the NDP government and their political interference and mismanagement of Hydro. I will mention a few of the previous government's boondoggles with Hydro. Political interference by the NDP to build Bipole III down the west side of Manitoba, close to a billion and a half dollars in unnecessary costs, plus 500 kilometres that cuts right across prime agricultural land in southern Manitoba. The government has never been a friend of the farmer and, obviously, they don't understand that putting the hydro line someplace else would've been a much better idea, but, no, they ran it across some of the prime land in Manitoba.

Every single major Hydro capital project commissioned by the NDP was behind schedule and over budget, creating serious issues for Manitoba's Crown jewel. Wuskwatim over budget by \$1.1 billion, 85 per cent higher than expected and over two years delayed. Bipole III expected to cost over \$5 billion, more than \$1.5 billion over budget and nearly a year behind schedule. So much for on-budget and on-time. We know that if it would've been other industries in there, it would've been on-budget and on-time. But with the NDP not a chance. Keeyask skyrocketed by \$2.2 billion to \$8.7 billion and is nearly three years behind

schedule. Not to mention the millions of dollars of untendered contracts.

Madam Speaker, I have just touched on a few of the previous government's failures and will continue later in my speech should time allow. I do need to talk about our government and what we have done and what we are going to do to change the dangerous course that Manitoba was on under the previous NDP government. We all know that this province belongs to the people of Manitoba, and not the government. In order to know what the people want, you must first consult with the people.

We embarked on the largest consultation process in Manitoba history, real meetings with true dialogue. In the last couple of months between the town hall meetings that myself and my colleagues held, the online surveys, virtual town halls and letters, along with in-person, we heard from over 35,000 Manitobans—35,000 Manitobans, Madam Speaker, that's a lot of people where I don't think the NDP have done that in the last number of years let alone in one year.

The town hall meeting that I held in La Verendrye was well attended and we had a great open discussion on the challenges facing Manitoba. The discussion was near and dear—the discussion that was near and dear to the hearts of everyone there was health care. Everyone wants a government health-care system, but they all understood the way our health-care system was going and had been previously run, it was not sustainable. They all wanted a health-care system, but they wanted one that would be there for their children and their grandchildren for the future. They all knew change was necessary, but they also, like others, know that change is not easy and, of course, they were skeptical because change is something that a lot of people don't like. I know, personally, there's certain areas of things that change is scary, but, in the meantime, the opposition is taking advantage of the people of Manitoba by scaring them, they're fear mongering.

Another one of their concerns was the fact that we spend close to a billion dollars a year to service Manitoba's debt, money that is spent with no return to Manitobans, none of that money really stays in Manitoba, it is a cost. They question how this got to be so high with record low interest rates, federal government transfers and a decent economy. With those factors we should've been going forwards not backwards. We should've been cutting our debt. We

should've been putting money into the bank. Again, NDP mismanagement.

As a government, we are changing the way things were done. We will be the most improved province by the end of our first term in government.

Madam Speaker, private enterprise creates jobs, government does not create jobs. It is the government's job to create an atmosphere where companies are willing to invest in this great province of ours, and investment creates jobs. Agriculture is an important part of Manitoba's economy. This is one area that our government initiatives are paying off. We have attracted over \$750 million in capital investment for protein production from crop and livestock. This includes Roquette's announcement of a new \$400-million pea processing plant in Portage with over 150 new jobs. One hundred and fifty new jobs is great news because not only are there new jobs, but the spinoff for the Portage area will be there for a long time. Portage residents will benefit for a long time. And it's—it shows that when companies are willing to come to Manitoba and invest \$400 million, they must have confidence in our government because they would not have come two or three years ago.

We have modernized the funding guidelines for Keystone Agricultural Producers. With the passing of Bill 35, KAP, as it's known, the Keystone Agricultural Producers, and its member farmers and farm product purchasers will benefit from reduced complexity and red tape as well as saving money. We amended Manitoba's Building Code to create farm-focused requirements which will ensure the safety of people and animals while creating a competitive environment. Our farm initiatives have played a role in the expansion of Manitoba's beef sector. The number of beef cows increased by 3 per cent, and the number of beef replacement heifers increased by 2 per cent, which is important because after BSE hit our province, the numbers of our cattle had gone down quite a bit. And building up our cattle herds is important because it does add to the economy of our province.

Our government believes in science, not like the previous government. In 2014, the NDP government commissioned University of Manitoba scientists to do a report. Like other reports, it did not fit their political scheme, so they ignored it. We acted on this advice from scientists to eliminate the ineffective use of anaerobic digesters in hog barns. The NDP prohibited building new or expanded hog barns

without anaerobic digester technology, a technology that doesn't work. I've talked to several major players in the hog industry, an outfit like HyLife, who spends millions and billions of dollars in Canada, and that—they—the system does not work. And that unfairly and—but mostly unscientifically targeted a sector of livestock producers.

But we will continue to enforce some of Canada's most stringent environmental protection laws. Farmers know how important the land is to them and future generations that want to farm. There's many young people who want to farm, and they know they can't take over a farm if that farm has been overfertilized and the soil has been killed. People know that. Farmers use great technology, as my previous colleague from Brandon West was talking about. Farming has some of the most advanced technology there is in the equipment, in the tractors, in everything. So farmers are great stewards of this land. Farmers know how important the land is to them and future generations. They will not destroy their future.

Again, this is where the previous government used emotion and fear to stop growth, not science. The previous NDP government were more committed to increasing red tape and input costs than they were in supporting our agriculture industry.

Our children are our future. Under the previous government, our children were subject to one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada. The NDP government left Manitoba with nearly 11,000 children in care and with one of the highest child apprehension rates in Canada. The use of food banks by children increased by 53 per cent from 2008 to 2016 under the NDP watch. We are going to change this.

* (16:30)

We are undoing the most—we are undergoing the most extensive child and family services reform ever in Manitoba with four goals: fewer children in care, fewer days in care, community-driven prevention and lifelong connections. Lifelong connections are important. One of the—in my—when I was in opposition, I got a number of calls from constituents that were concerned. They were foster parents, and they had the children removed from their home to be put into a different home. These kids were with them for a number of years from when they were babies. These kids did not want to move, but yet they were moved, and that is wrong because when you yank a six-year-old out of a home

that's been there since it's been a child, that is not right, and it was happening under the previous government's watch. We are going to change this. This is definitely something that is wrong.

Our government is looking at innovative solutions to improve social challenges. Social impact bonds are one such initiative. Our government is investing in child care with new innovations to create new child-care spaces, reduce wait times, eliminate red tape and foster better outcomes for the families with young children.

Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, in my speech, health care is near and dear to the hearts of all Manitobans. During the 2016 election, we committed to them to reducing ambulance fees by 50 per cent during our first term in government. As of April 1st, 2017, we have reduced these fees to a maximum of \$425, and they will go down to 200—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): It's always a great honour to speak in this Chamber, especially about a subject that is very dear to my heart. It's the welfare of our people. And I want to start off by saying that love is my religion and my faith, and the law is my only mistress. Charity is the only measure of mercy that I will practise every day.

Our people, those who reside in our great province, are very resilient. We have gone through rough times during those floods from 2011, but prior to that in 1997 and even prior to that, way back in the 1950s. And we have had enough disasters in our hands, and the disasters that hit us were natural, but one of the worst disasters that hit us was the repeat of the Conservative government's cuts. It's not a natural disaster. It was a predictable disaster. The cuts to the health-care system were very severe, and it has resulted in people being laid off; it was never part of the campaign promise. Nurses from St. Boniface and from the Health Sciences Centre and from the Victoria hospital have been deleted, and it is a very familiar tone. It's as if by hitting the delete button it solves all the problems of the world.

What has the Conservative government deleted? It has deleted hope for our people. The only hope that people have when they don't have anything is that the government will be there to assist, to aid, to help, to feed them and to be compassionate about their lot, about their circumstance.

Governments have to be a little bit more than just a business. I see the Conservative government as

running the province as if it were a business with a profit-and-loss statement, and it's amazing how that particular attitude of whether it's making money or not or saving money from operations is working. I resent the fact that cutting expenditure on the back on people is acceptable, especially when we have how many people on the other side, 39? Thirty-nine who have—who are complicit in their attempt to hurt as many people as they can. I don't think that's fair. They never intended to do that. They never intended to hurt people, but then in their judgment which I would say is invalid, unreasonable, unconscionable, unacceptable; the reasoning is that we need to cut, we need to cut on expenses and we need to cut on expenditures, as if government has to show a profit.

Poverty is our burden to carry. It is heavy, and in my area of the Weston and Brooklands, I have people who are hurting, and for those people who are hurting, government's role has to be to help out, to assist, to provide and not cut.

Even for the small amount of 25 cents that will be imposed as additional fare for Winnipeg Transit, some of my friends from Ross and some of my friends from Alexander can't even take the bus anymore if they have to pay extra. It will be \$100 per month for those who want to get a monthly bus pass, and it's easy for me to say that, well, that won't hurt too much. I drive a car and I think all of us here in this Chamber, we all drive a car. But some of our—some of the residents in my area are so afraid of being unable to even go downtown and go for the interview during those renewal applications for EIA, and it is amazing how sometimes we just—it's only 25 cents. For those who have none, 25 cents is a big amount of money.

* (16:40)

And I just wish that our society won't be as cold and won't be as callous. The harsh measures that have been put in place, especially for the seniors, the seniors who have undergone surgery for their hip or knee when they require those therapists, whether physio or occupational therapists. It's just amazing how they said, well, I was banking on being able to walk again, and it may take them a little while longer to do that for a very simple reason, they cannot afford the outside physio therapist or occupational therapist that they need. And this was not even mentioned during the campaign of 2016.

Front-line services have been decimated. I have just been to Seven Oaks hospital with my brother-in-law. He's having his bouts of shingles, and it was

a painful disease that he had right over his head and onto his eyes, and that got me worried because shingles, when it affects the nerves close to your eyes, you could lose your eyesight, and that's why I brought him there. Well, the reception was very—there was only one person who was waiting, and we were attended to quite easily, and I was happy. I said, oh, everything must really be working according to the plans of the Conservative government, and I was very thankful, and, then, one of those nurses said, well, people now go to the Health Sciences Centre because they thought that we could not treat them here anymore.

And it's a general demoralizing effect of being confused where to go and not knowing if it is the appropriate medical facility that they'll be to—going to, and it's just the confusion and the general lack of knowledge. And there's a pretense on the part of this government, the illusion that's created is that by putting everything online people will know. By putting the wait times online, people would understand. And there's a campaign, even in YouTube, that says we are doing everything about health care, these are changes that are needed, and I don't know who's paying for that, but those advertisements are supposed to soften the blow because the blow is on the heads of those who are suffering, and it's on those who are really reeling from the effects of illness, those who are suffering from chronic diseases, those who are suffering from their own addictions. And I see that as part of a misunderstanding on the part of the Conservative government about the real honest-to-goodness solutions to the problems that we have as a society.

Our society has to be more than just a compassionate one. We have to use all our available resources to make life easier, especially for those who cannot afford to make it on their own. Lucky us, we are members of the Legislative Assembly. We make \$94,260 every year, with a net income of \$7,033 every month. And I cringe when I see people who are still hurting who are homeless, and I find myself feeling guilty a little bit that we in this province still have the Siloam Mission and the Main Street Project and the Madison street housing and the QuickCare clinics that have been closed. It's—I am amazed that we have allowed ourselves such allowance. We have given ourselves some slack that we are not, well, embarrassed by the state of affairs as we see it. The effects of the cuts of the Conservative government will be with us for at least a generation.

And, whenever a minister stands up and answers a question in this House, I see deflection and a rerouting of answers. You ask a yes or a no question and the answer invariably suggests the commitment of that government to do things right, and I feel that it's an illusion. It's more propaganda. It's more about 'deflecting'—deflecting the issues. It's not to give real answers, and I find myself really just shaking my head and getting the—my levels of frustration higher and my sugar level higher and my blood pressure higher whenever I hear a non-answer from a minister who's supposed to be a minister of the Crown, who was supposed to honestly answer questions, but I never hear that. I think there's a seminar ongoing within Cabinet—and this is my suspicion— that they are trained how not to answer questions during question period, and even if the question were specific enough, the answer we get is invariably a non-answer, and we're getting so used to it that we just laugh it off. We take the high road. We won't even say anything about it, and it is not fair, not to the opposition or to the independents. It's not fair to our people, especially when they are watching us, when they are hearing us, and when the member from Emerson says that it is appalling, I agree with him. The attitude is appalling, and thank you, thank you, for helping me out with those words.

There is a place for all of this at—I mean the way that we have behaved in this Chamber, and there is a place for it, and it's not this place. I am a very tolerant person, especially for those who are improper, impolite or discourteous, because I myself sometimes am impolite, improper and discourteous, and I could accept that anything that I give I should be able to take, but in this Chamber the lack of respect that we have for each other has to change somehow. I don't know how.

* (16:50)

Maybe in another generation, there will be people who will be here, seated at my desk, who will be a little bit more behaved and who will be a little bit more respecting of the others. And hopefully, there'll be members of Cabinet who will be a little bit more respecting of the jobs for which they are paid big bucks.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Well, Madam Speaker, this is probably a first in a long time since we were in opposition that I was up three times in one day, and it's like the old days when we used to have to do questions and we had to say either

a private member's statement or a grievance or debate. And it was great to be up here, and the opportunity that I have to put a few words here today about the Throne Speech that was read last week, the Third Session of the 41st Manitoba Legislature.

And our government remains committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada. We are setting the course, one-of the focus of a long-term, sustainable measures to fix our finances, to improve the services relied upon of our citizens and to rebuild our economy.

Manitoba is home of hope and inclusion of people. Madam Speaker, I have to honestly say that being a Progressive Conservative, I'm—that's really a good description of myself. I would believe that I'm a fiscal conservative. I ran my own business. I took care of my own household, making sure that the budgets were balanced, and with my own business, I was 26 years old when I had the opportunity to buy a business in Virden, Manitoba, and it was a chance of a lifetime. And I really believe that—so passionate about being a capitalist and helping out the economy and doing—and I've actually provided many jobs in our community of Virden, Manitoba. I think I employed a total of 18 people along with a few business partners that I had and had a wonderful team there. You know, we actually had—I was first a business partner with a person named Brent Patmore. We bought the business together. I was—I bought the business first, so I bought 25 per cent when I was 26 and bought another 25 per cent when I was 27. And I had become a business partner, equal business partner, with a person who I didn't even know who came forward and we had the same goals and passions, and we've been business partners for over 16 years together, until we formed a—we actually formed a merge with another company called Tycoles Insurance.

And I remember when I was 26 years old. I was—it was during 1994 when Filmon government was in power. And I was able to buy the business, and I remember there was such a good—great environment, and I remember—that environment, I believe, is going to be coming back because after 16, 17 years of NDP government, they've created a red tape that I can't imagine a person, 26, to buy a business at this point in time. And along with the incentive of buying a business, I remember there's incentives, tax incentives. And I remember that was one reason I took the risk. And, you know, at that time, when I was—when I bought the business, 26, going into debt, probably more of a higher amount of debt than most

person would ever had when they bought a house at the time. And the thing was, that broker business—there was—the banks would not look at that broker business as collateral. I had to look for other form of financing when I bought that business.

And I remember my mother-in-law, who was my fiancée's mother, who wasn't my mother-in-law at the time, knew that I wanted to buy this business. And you know what? She actually came to me and offered to co-sign the loan that I had. And I remember I was amazed by a person, who I wasn't even married to her daughter yet, who believed in me and actually would co-sign a loan for me. And she believed in me. And she decided that she wanted to go forward. I remember we had to go and talk to their—her—my in-laws' lawyer to talk about signing up for this loan. And I remember they had an opportunity to meet with them and I had the opportunity to meet. I still remember that day that I met with this lawyer. He told me the worst case scenarios to a point where after that meeting, after meeting with him for an hour, I didn't even know if I wanted to get into business. You know, he—it's, I guess, what lawyers do. They tell you the worst case scenarios and—but you know what? I came back to my mother-in-law and my father-in-law, and she was the one that said, you know, I listened to him, too, but I still want to go forward and sign, co-sign. And the rest was history. I had the—I bought the business and to this day my mother-in-law, who was from Jamaica, who came here in 1959 to come to Canada for opportunity and to that day I—she's been a Progressive Conservative supporter because that's who was in power at the time she came.

She was like—when she was twenty—I think—believe she was 29 in Jamaica when she actually had the opportunity to come to Canada. She signed up on a program, which she wasn't selected. She almost gave up hope. She almost—I think—believe she told me she waited almost a whole year. She was almost giving up hope. In Jamaica, Madam Speaker, like, things are desolate sometimes when you're—depending on which family you're born into. I know her dad was a white-collar worker. He was an accountant at a firm, but even then it was hard times and she wanted to come to Canada so badly and she had the opportunity.

She came to Canada. She came as a domestic housekeeper, and she actually worked on one of the houses in Wellington Crescent, and, Madam Speaker, when she came here she was—you know, she's just a special person. Like, you know, I don't

even look at her as my wife's mother or my mother-in-law; she's like a mother to me. She's my second mother and we have this special relationship, and she does that with everybody that she meets. And I know all my in-laws and—that I know, that were married into the family, this thing of her being so wonderful.

But I remember when she told me the story where she actually worked domestic help with the person that owned the house at Wellington Crescent, her boss, and she was the one that got her to—encouraged her to apply for an LPN and she actually took the course and became an LPN. And, Madam Speaker, when she became a nurse, an LPN, she—one of her first jobs was to look after a individual who was—needed assistance, and that happened to be my wife's grandmother. She was a war bride in World War I. Her—she came back—she came to Canada from England and that's where my mother-in-law actually worked to look after her future mother-in-law.

And so when she—she was married to my father-in-law and they got married probably in the early '60s and they actually had children, my wife and her family. But it was a funny story, as that their—they had a son who was born in '64, who's a couple years older than I was, and they thought that because they were older couple they wouldn't have kids anymore, so they adopted a girl. Her name is Denise [*phonetic*]. And she was the same age as me, but then when they—after you adopt the—my sister-in-law, they realized she was pregnant and she was pregnant with twins. So there was four kids under the age of three in the family, and she worked really hard.

And I remember my mother-in-law also, what she did was she had to sometimes stay home with these—with the children, and I remember sometimes her husband got injured and I remember they were telling me stories about how they had to take food

hampers during Christmas. And my wife remembers the stories of how her mom had to make clothes and—but then after she—the family got a little bit older, she was able to go back to work and work as a—an LPN for many years and retired back in the early '90s as an LPN in Concordia Hospital.

And like again Michelle's—my wife's Michelle—her brother is—the older brother is now—they've all done well for themselves. They all had university educations. My brother-in-law got a scholarship because of hockey. He got to go to Superior state university, got a hockey scholarship, and he was also drafted to the New York Rangers, and he played in the—he actually was traded to Minnesota North Stars. He one time played against the Winnipeg Jets, against Pokey Reddick, and there were the two—it was kind of nice to see the picture because there was two black hockey players that you never see very often, especially back in those days in the early '90s, and so my brother-in-law stayed in the hockey industry and actually became a hockey coach and now to—now he's actually coaching the—assistant coach for the Calgary Flames, and we have opportunities to go and watch hockey and—

An Honourable Member: Better than the Stampeders.

Mr. Piwniuk: Yes. And you know—and I know—I remember going back by being in this—going in business and stuff, it's all about inclusions, and I think I learned about inclusions from an early age—

* (17:00)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 11 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 27, 2017

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Indigenous Children in Care	
Bill 3–The Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Labour Mobility Act and Regulated Health Professions Act Amended)		Fontaine	116
Pedersen	109	Fielding	116
Bill 208–The Conflict of Interest Act		Poverty Reduction Strategy	
Fletcher	109	B. Smith	117
Bill 210–The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act		Fielding	117
Fletcher	109	Public Transit Fare Increase	
Ministerial Statements		B. Smith	117
Canadian Free Trade Agreement		Fielding	118
Pedersen	110	Poverty Reduction Strategy	
Allum	110	B. Smith	118
Gerrard	111	Fielding	118
Members' Statements		Public Transit Services	
Yazidi Refugees in Canada		Wiebe	118
Micklefield	111	Eichler	118
Anishinabe Place of Hope		Agriculture Industry	
F. Marcelino	112	Gerrard	119
Prairie Partners Inc.		Clarke	119
Piwniuk	112	Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries	
West Broadway Youth Outreach		Piwniuk	120
Altemeyer	113	Cullen	120
Eric Irwin		Adverse Effects Agreement	
Michaleski	113	Lathlin	120
Oral Questions		Cullen	121
Mayor of Dauphin		Writing of the Throne Speech	
Kinew	114	Allum	121
Stefanson	114	Friesen	121
Emergency Medical Services		Red River Valley Water Supply Project	
Kinew	114	Altemeyer	122
Goertzen	114	Clarke	122
Municipal Funding Agreements		Speaker's Ruling	
Kinew	115	Driedger	122
Eichler	115	Petitions	
		Corydon Primary Care Clinic and Misericordia Urgent Care Centre	
		Gerrard	123

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Throne Speech

(Fourth Day of Debate)

Lindsey	124
Clarke	125
Wiebe	129
Helwer	133
Swan	136
Smook	140
T. Marcelino	144
Piwniuk	145

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