

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXII No. 23 - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 12, 2019

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

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 9—The Family Law Modernization Act

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that Bill 9, The Family Law Modernization Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, Bill 9 is the first-in-Canada legislation that will move most family law disputes outside of the traditional court-based process. They will do this by expanding the administrative authority of the Maintenance Enforcement Program and the child support service. Bill 9 also creates a new dispute resolution service pilot project to assist Manitoba families in resolving their disputes.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to be joined in the gallery by stakeholders from Legal Help Centre, Mediation Services Winnipeg, North Forge Technology Exchange and the private bar for introduction of this legislation.

Thank you very much.

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

Bill 220—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that Bill 220, The Vital

Statistics Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: Once again I rise to introduce Bill 220, a bill that would provide a gender-neutral identification option for non-binary Manitobans on their government-issued IDs, like a birth certificate.

Bill 220 was brought forward by a constituent who recognized this gap in ensuring Manitoba is an inclusive place. I am very happy to bring this forward for consideration by the House.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ruthanne Dyck

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, today, I have the honour of recognizing Mrs. Ruthanne Dyck, the principal at École South Pointe School in the St. Norbert constituency, who was recently selected as one of Canada's 30 Outstanding Principals for 2019 by The Learning Partnership, a Canadian charity focused on excellence in education and professional development.

Ruthanne has 29 years of experience as an educator. She holds a master's degree in educational leadership and administration from the University of Manitoba and is certified as a life coach by the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching.

With the support of a team of more than 60 teachers and 24 educational assistants, Ruthanne helped guide the construction of the dual-track South Pointe School before and after transitioning 875 culturally diverse kindergarten-to-grade 8 students into the new building in January of 2017.

Prior to South Pointe School, her previous roles included vice-principal at Chancellor school,

principal at Laidlaw School and principal at Whyte Ridge Elementary school.

Her own continued educational development, plus her desire for the success of students and teachers in the classroom and the community has resulted in South Pointe's positive, progressive environment, inspiring children to learn every day. Ruthanne visits classrooms daily, connect with students and mentoring staff to provide a meaningful, inclusive, curiosity-based education, all while also overseeing the school's administration.

Ruthanne has summed up her philosophy on her own success this way: If I am truly outstanding, it's because I have been shaped and influenced, inspired and challenged and supported by all the people I've worked with my entire career.

Today we are honoured to have in the gallery École South Pointe School's principal, Ruthanne Dyck, her husband, Barry Dyck, and her award nominator, South Pointe vice-principal Glenys MacLeod.

Madam Speaker, I believe I speak for all St. Norbert constituents and all Manitobans in saying thank you, Ruthanne, for inspiring everyone within the school and our community to achieve the greatest possible outcomes today and in the future.

Health-Care Services

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, last week the Pallister government released their budget and left Manitobans fearful about the future of their already strained health-care system.

The health-care overhaul has led to unbelievably high wait times, nursing shortages, cancelled surgeries and bed closures. After underspending by a quarter of a million dollars this past year, Budget 2019 plans to cut \$120 million more from the health-care budget.

Given the increase in wait times and staff shortages, we need more nurses to keep ERs open, but at Seven Oaks hospital, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has allowed nurse vacancies to rise 34 per cent, putting patient care at risk.

North Winnipeg health care will be further hurt and damaged this summer when the government proceeds with the closure of the Seven Oaks ER. This will leave residents without access to health-care services, forcing them to travel 20 minutes or more to an overcrowded St. Boniface

or Health Sciences Centre. This will be especially hard for our seniors who have frequent health-care needs but limited access to transportation.

Manitobans in our health-care system have experienced enough cuts. This government needs to start listening to us and stop the closure of Seven Oaks.

Rogers Hometown Hockey

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize a Rogers Hometown Hockey event that took place in my constituency, in the city of Winkler on March the 2nd and 3rd.

Rogers Hometown Hockey festival is a free, jam-packed weekend celebration for hockey fans of all ages. It highlighted the best of Winkler and its deep hockey roots, including local NHL players like Eddie Belfour, Eric Fehr, Dustin Penner and others from southern Manitoba.

* (13:40)

This year's event built on the successes of the first time the event was held in Winkler, back in 2008. Festivities included a viewing of the Stanley Cup and musical performances by local artists and Juno winners The Color, as well as Doc Walker.

The TV broadcast to follow showed segments highlighting the deep Mennonite roots of Winkler, the long-standing friendly rivalry between Morden and Winkler, and even a tour of The Ens Heritage Homestead in Chortitz, a well-preserved farm that demonstrates how Mennonites from Russia organized early settlements in southern Manitoba.

This event culminated in an outdoor viewing party at -25° and the broadcast was hosted by icons Ron Maclean and Tara Slone. I was delighted to take part in the event, and I remind the House it was no coincidence that, with the support of the city of Winkler and us cheering, the Jets won the game 5-2 against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight Roger's Hometown Hockey for shining a light on the city of Winkler and commend local residents and organizers who took part in making this event a lasting success. We know how positive events like this are in the community and how lasting those memories will be for young people in the city and across the entire province.

Thank you.

Evelyne Anderson

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, I would like to rise and mark the passing of a legend of Winnipeg theatre: Evelyne Anderson.

Many of you who have attended plays at Rainbow Stage, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Prairie Theatre Exchange over the last decades would have seen her, though she also performed across Canada and the US. Her career was an astonishing 60 years. She made 52 appearances on the Royal MTC stage and 25 at Rainbow Stage.

She grew up in St. Boniface on Enfield, the daughter of Marcelle Roberts and William Anderson, a composer. She was close to her sisters and brothers: Angèle, Marie, Gabrielle, Jeffrey, David and Paul.

She was a soloist in several choirs in the city and began to perform in musical theatre, including leading roles in the first seasons of Rainbow Stage.

She had decided to pursue professional stage training in England at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. One of her fellow students there was Gene Wilder, who said she had everyone in stitches even when he was trying to be serious. She shared the stage with Peter O'Toole, who brought—bought her her first drink, and shortly before graduating her abilities secured her a year-long contract at the Savoy in London's West End.

Evie returned to Winnipeg, performing with the Canadian Players US tour and in the first productions of a newly founded Manitoba Theatre Centre. When she returned to Winnipeg, because of her professional training, she insisted on being paid for her work.

When Canadian unions would not come to Winnipeg to represent actors, Actors' Equity from the US stepped in with her encouragement. So she helped secure good wages, benefits and pensions for actors in Winnipeg.

Here in Winnipeg she also met her husband-to-be: my uncle, John Lamont. They were introduced to each other by my father Frank, who knew Evie from Gordon Bell. John, a lawyer, was incredibly supportive of her career, and they were married for 55 years.

She continued to make history throughout her career. On a tour of the southern United States she

performed in front of the first-ever desegregated audience in Memphis, Tennessee.

Steven Schipper very kindly remembered her as a consummate professional actor and a simply beautiful, decent human being.

Our families were and remain close. We often vacationed together at the cottage at Ponemah at Lake Winnipeg and shared Christmases and Thanksgivings. Evie and John had three children they adored—my cousins Andrew, Madeleine and Maria—and they adored their grandchildren as well.

As her family, while we appreciated her talents as children—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to conclude his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Lamont: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As children, we had no idea that there was anything exceptional about her role in the Winnipeg theatre community.

The Winnipeg theatre community paid her a wonderful tribute at their newly inaugurated awards. In their first year, as they gave her a lifetime achievement award, and in their second, they named the awards after her: The Evies.

When she received her award at the West End Cultural Centre, she said her life had come full circle. She performed there in her youth when it was a church, had travelled to London's West End to perform, and returned back for the theatre awards. She lived a full and extraordinary life and always said, I had it all.

She will be missed.

Lexi Orbanski

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I stand in the House today to bring attention to a young lady who is one of my constituents in the Interlake.

Nineteen-year-old Lexi Orbanski graduated from the Arborg Collegiate and moved on to take a two-year baking and pastry program at the George Brown College. This college offers culinary programs in Toronto.

The first term recently ended for Lexi and it finished on a very high note. Each year the school

holds a gingerbread competition for the students. Lexi was in the top 10, earning third place. This third-place position allowed Lexi to enter into a competition hosted by a major Toronto hotel. Lexi then took first place in this competition. The Sheraton Centre Hotel finished by putting all the pastries on display for the public to view.

So, at an early age, starting out in her mother's kitchen at her home in Arborg, is when Lexi found her passion. She sold her first cake when she was 16 years old. Lexi started selling her creations as orders came pouring in from neighbouring towns and some as far away as Winnipeg.

Obviously, Lexi has a natural talent for baking, using old cookbooks with just the right modifications to the recipes to make it her perfection.

Lexi is heading back to Toronto for her second year of her program. You can check out Lexi's beautiful creations on Instagram, and her handle is @lexilynncakes.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues to help me wish Lexi all the best in her studies, and maybe one day make an order from Lexi Lynn cakes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Death of Tina Fontaine Children's Advocate Report

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I want to offer my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family of Tina Fontaine, to her grandmother, to the community of Sagkeeng and to everyone who feels saddened at the loss of this young woman's life. We know that Tina Fontaine's death galvanized attention onto the issues of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in this country, as well as the need to fix a broken CFS system.

Since the time of her death, there have been steps forward; there have been steps back. Today, perhaps, there is the opportunity for some more progress to rectify some of these challenges with the release of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth's report into her death.

Now, we can only hope that Tina's legacy eventually will be to see action on mental health to help families dealing with intergenerational struggles from residential schools and to ensure that no child grows up with a traumatic childhood in Manitoba.

We have to respond to this report with compassion; does the Premier agree?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Yes, we do, Madam Speaker, very much agree, and I thank the opposition leader for his astute observations on this issue. It is a challenge that must unite us, not divide us. It's a challenge in many different facets of government, yes, but also in terms of community challenges, individual challenges that we all have to rise to.

And I think it's critical that we all accept those challenges and, certainly, we look forward to reviewing in detail the recommendations of the child advocate. We brought in legislation, Madam Speaker, as a new government to expand the advocate's role and empower the advocate's office to be able to compile recommendations and to do good work in respect of addressing these issues and advising us on how to do a better job.

So I am encouraged by the words of the leader of the opposition, and I believe this is, frankly, an issue that has been heightened by the inquiry, but, nonetheless, an issue that should empower all of us to achieve positive outcomes as a consequence of the tragedies around Tina's passing.

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

Children's Advocate Report Implementation of Recommendations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Tina Fontaine is one of the reasons that some of us entered politics, Madam Speaker, yet we also have to recognize that there is a limit to what government can do to respond.

For instance, it has to be indigenous families and indigenous communities ourselves that do the heavy lifting to make sure that an indigenous family and an indigenous community can be well. Indigenous men such as myself have to do the hard work of becoming better husbands, partners, fathers and sons in our community. Indigenous men such as myself have to leave the party lifestyle behind. We have to end domestic violence. We have to conquer toxic masculinity in our communities, and this is crucially important.

That said, there is a very important role for government to play, and that is to support these communities and individuals doing the hard work.

With that in mind, will the Premier commit to implementing all five recommendations from today's report?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, again, I thank the opposition leader for his observations on this important issue.

* (13:50)

There are many, many responsibilities—and I am so pleased to hear the approach he's taken in his first two questions today because the days of finger pointing, blame placing, looking to the past for faults, I think, are—should be past us and we should be able to focus together on learning from those tragedies and now, moving forward, the layering of responsibilities. Yes, that's true, there are responsibilities individually and at the community level.

But it is our role here to focus on what we can do to empower others to face these challenges, and I think in terms of things like social development and economic strategies, they are going to play a part in enabling and uplifting people at the community level.

And we need to change our attitudes, as well, so that we're facing these challenges together as a united people in Manitoba so that other jurisdictions across the country can learn from our example of how to face these challenges together.

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

Truth and Reconciliation—Calls to Action Implementation of Recommendations

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today's report is important, yet we ought to also recognize that many of these recommendations have been advocated for by community members for many, many years, around-the-clock safe space for youth, as an example.

We also ought to note that when it comes to addressing the intergenerational challenges that so many families in our province are struggling with, that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has already sketched out 94 calls to action which represent a path to making families well and making our country whole once again.

Again, part of responding to Tina Fontaine's death must be the implementation of the Truth of

Reconciliation Commission. You heard the children's advocate say as much in her remarks to media today.

One sobering line from today's report is that there are currently 17 youth at risk of imminent death or harm in the province of Manitoba, and we must be motivated by their well-being to address these long-standing issues.

I would ask the Premier, as part of his response to the Tina Fontaine report today, if he will commit to the full implementation of all 94 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I can't do that, Madam Speaker, solely on the grounds that many of those recommendations are not directed to premiers or to provincial governments at all. But 34 of them are, and we have moved steadily forward on implementation; already 25 of those recommendations have been implemented or are in completion by this government at this point in time.

And I assure the opposition leader that he will not find another premier who is more focused or committed to achieving the goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and, frankly, many of the goals as stated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples too many long years ago, Madam Speaker.

We need to make progress together. That is certainly the goal of this government.

Youth Mental Health and Addiction Request for Provincial Strategy

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Today I quote from the children's advocate report on Tina Fontaine released just hours ago. Quote: It has been 10 months since the Province released their mental health and addiction strategy, and while announcements and investments have been made by the government regarding Manitoba adults, children and youth—which the government identified as a population in desperate need—remain waiting to hear the implementation plans. If early intervention and upstream investments are more than buzzwords, the government will expediate the public release of a clear implementation plan to address the child- and youth-specific recommendations contained in their VIRGO report. End quote.

When will the minister and her government listen to Daphne Penrose and publicly release a mental health and addiction strategy for youth in our province?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): We thank the child advocate for her report and, as the Premier (Mr. Pallister) had suggested, it's another opportunity for all Manitobans to focus our efforts on improving the system.

Our government is focused on improving our system. It's why we have made the strides to make advances in terms of mental health and addictions investments to strengthen our system. The VIRGO report is an important road map that puts us on—in the right lane to be able to make strides to both have our systems coalesce better, to co-operate better and to integrate better. It's part of the road map we've put in place with the introduction of Bill 10.

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

**Children's Advocate Report
re: Education Review
Suspensions and Expulsions Recommendation**

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): The child advocate's report recommends that the new education review carefully examine the use of expulsions and suspensions in public school so they can be limited, reduced or phased out.

A recommendation that was brought—first brought to the government's attention in a children's advocate report released in 2000—October 2018: Madam Speaker, no child should feel left without critical services in a time of need. A review could provide disciplinary alternatives that are in the best interest of our children and better aligned with their needs.

Will the Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Minister of Health commit to implementing this recommendation today?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): As identified both—by both the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and Minister of Health, we take the recommendations that the children's advocate brings forward as important. We want to ensure that there's no—there's more services and supports that the—that advocate for vulnerable children.

We have taken strong action. We will continue to take strong action. We'll be addressing things that are—happen in the child-welfare system, things like the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. We've implemented more than 90 per cent of the recommendations that's a part of it. We've implemented close to 25 of

the 34 recommendations that relate to the truth and reconciliation committee.

We want to ensure that vulnerable children are protected, and we very much appreciate the recommendations and report from the children's advocate.

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

**Youth Mental Health and Addiction
Culturally Appropriate Treatment Services**

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I quote again from today's report. Quote: My recommendation to Child and Family Services is focused on—is to focus on their responsibility for child safety and in responding when children are in need of protection. What Tina might have benefited from was access to full continuum of services for children at—in 'innimate' danger, and this continuum includes safe and secure treatment facilities that are therapeutic, culturally informed and effective or, as Tina described to her CFS agency, a place where it feels like home. End quote.

Will the minister commit to ensuring all children in care have access to safe, secure and culturally appropriate treatment facilities so we do not fail another child?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): That 'recommation' does fall within, kind of, the—within some of the recommendations that are happening in terms of the child-welfare and justice systems that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) has undertaken.

We as a government truly want to ensure that vulnerable children are supported. That's why we've introduced a comprehensive reform of the child-welfare system. We've done things like the protecting children action as one of our first actions of government to make sure systems are talking to each other, and that's what so important in terms of this.

We also know that having things like customary care, which is a legislation that we introduced, will allow culture to be a big part of the child-welfare system, and we are pleased that we're seeing some signs of success with the amount of children in care being reduced for the first time in 15 years.

But much, much more work needs to happen, and so we, again, embrace the recommendations of the report from the children's advocate.

Children's Advocate Report Government Response

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): It took the tragic murder of Tina Fontaine, a child, to galvanize Canada in recognizing the epidemic levels of violence against the bodies of indigenous women and girls.

But still, I've often heard people question why didn't Tina's family do anything to help her. To be clear, Madam Speaker, Tina's Auntie Thelma and Uncle Joe, like many families, did everything within their power to in—to keep her safe and to attempt to access resources.

Tina's murder was a systems failure.

So, moving forward, how will the government respond to today's report?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I think everyone from all levels of government to all areas—social services, as well as parenting, as the minister—as the leader of the opposition talked about—needs to be a part of the solution, and that's why we've engaged in a comprehensive reform of the child-welfare system: to make sure that supports are in place for vulnerable children. That should take consideration of things like earlier intervention and prevention to make sure that supports and services are there before people have to enter the child-welfare system.

We want to make sure that people are supported and people have an opportunity to grow, grow as individuals and have the love and support that's so much there. We want to ensure that people are staying in homes, not hotels, Madam Speaker.

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

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Request for Government Plan of Action

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Tina's murder not only shone light on the critical need for systemic changes in accessing mental health services and addictions, but also the need to support MMIWG family members here in Manitoba.

* (14:00)

Over the last 20 years, I've been so blessed to work with so many families and—not only here in Manitoba, but across Canada—and, Madam Speaker, if you want to see examples of courage, forgiveness,

determination, kindness, resiliency or love, you need not look any further than an MMIWG family. They are truly some of the best people that I know.

And so, moving forward today, can the government share their plan to support MMIWG families here in Manitoba?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): We want to ensure people—and I think the member is exactly right—there is a number of people that—from the murdered and missing women—were identified in the child-welfare system. And so that's why it's so important to address people in the child-welfare system, to make sure that they have supports and services.

We know that over 80 per cent of the people that come out of the child-welfare system go on to be homeless, go on to mental health and addictions issues. That's why it's so important to reform the child-welfare system, and that's why we've been focused as a government, right from day one, in terms of our approach to address this, to make sure vulnerable children are supported, to make sure that they have the supports and services to be—to have as much supports and services as they can, as Manitobans.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Manitoba MMIWG families spent hundreds of hours testifying before the national inquiry on indigenous women and girls when they were in Manitoba, putting their loved ones' story on the official Canadian record, and also in an attempt to seek and have some semblance of justice. Many Manitoba families are concerned there's been no follow-up from a variety of different levels of government still today. While the national inquiry prepares to release its final report, families are encouraging all levels of government to not wait for the final report, but also to do immediate action now.

And so, moving forward from today's report on Tina Fontaine, can the Premier share with Manitobans what the plan of action is, starting today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, if I have the time to address each of the recommendations, I will—preface it by saying only in summary can I do that because there's a tremendous amount of work that's gone into the advocate's recommendations, and we thank her for the work.

But recommendation No. 1 was: secure placements for treatment and programming. You know, less motels, more homes. This is within the youth justice review, but we've already taken action on that and we are studying policies in other jurisdictions to see what we can learn about best practices.

In terms of the second: school suspensions and expulsions. We'll be 'porwarding' this information and this concern to the independent commission that will be reviewing the K-to-12 education system to see if there are ideas that may be relevant and could be implemented.

Three, Health is working on a number of VIRGO-based initiatives around the issue of closer preventative work in terms of mental health development, drug prevention and so on. And I could go on, but I see I have inadequate time.

I just would encourage the member to recognize that we have taken action and will continue to on the concerns that we share.

Curriculum Support Centre Elimination of Library Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I think many of us love going to the library. In fact, just last week, my son came home and he was super excited because he'd borrowed an Xbox game for his brother from one of the public libraries in our city.

But libraries and library services are not only being cut under this government, we know that they're also closing some of these centres. In particular, there's a very specialized library called the Curriculum Support Centre. This one lends materials to teachers so that they can give a better education to students in the classroom. That helps rural and northern teachers. It provides materials for students with disabilities by lending out large texts and texts in braille. And yet this is now being closed because of the austerity agenda of this government.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) stop his plans to close the Curriculum Support Centre in Winnipeg and invest in education?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, of course, we are modernising the Curriculum Support Centre using the access to the Internet to ensure that resources are available throughout Manitoba. We know that every other province in Canada has gone to that. The book resources will still be available within the education

system, but every other province has moved away from the model that we have and are putting more information available on the Internet.

Of course, we're building seven new schools, and within each of those schools will be a library, Madam Speaker. Far more libraries than were ever built under the NDP.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, again, this is not a library that necessarily lends directly to students, but rather supports educators, supports the teachers so that they can teach children to their full potential.

So, in March 2016 the education resource library, which this centre was called at the time, they actually celebrated their 100th anniversary, and their program manager, Nancy Girardin, talked about all the resources they had—science kits, math games, audio books—but what the manager was most excited about were the new digital resources that the library could offer to teachers, to EAs, to counsellors and to so many educators.

So, again, just to make clear for the Education Minister, the library provided their support and their resources digitally over the Internet and made their resources accessible using current technology.

So the investment in literacy and numeracy is worth it; we know this. We know that investing and supporting in teachers is the proper way to expand education in Manitoba.

Will the Premier stop the plans to close the Curriculum Support Centre and invest in literacy and numeracy instead?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, there's not another province in Canada that is doing things the way we were doing. Most have expanded their Internet availability so teachers around the province, not just those in Winnipeg, could have access to these resources. We want to ensure that all teachers have the ability to get these resources online.

We continue to invest in libraries. In fact, we are building a new library at école 'rivère-rigouge', École South Pointe School, École Sage Creek School, a new library at Pine Ridge Elementary. There'll be a new library at Niverville high school. There'll be a new library at Waterford Green K-to-8 school. There'll be a new library at Templeton K-to-5 school. There'll be a new library at Maryland school. There'll

be a new—I'm sorry, I'm out of time, but there's new libraries everywhere, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: So once again, Madam Speaker, the purpose of this centre was to support teachers, to lend them the resources, to send them resources so that they could teach students to their full potential.

So, again, their manager offering these services at no cost, Nancy Girardin, she said, and I quote here, I'll table the document so I can read the quote directly: A teacher could call and say I'm doing this topic at this grade level, can you send—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —me some resources like books, DVDs and kits? And we will get the package together and send it out free of charge wherever your school may be located in Manitoba. End quote.

So, again, you can put materials online, but it is the direct relationship building and professional development opportunities offered directly to educators that made this centre so important, Madam Speaker, and the fact that they had a province-ride week—province-wide reach certainly underlined the equity offered by this program.

So will the Education Minister and his Premier simply cancel their plans to close the centre and commit to investing in education in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, our education system is changing and what was needed 100 years ago in the education system might've been quite radically different from what is needed today. Certainly, our concerns are to empower teachers, who are at the front line educating our children.

And, Madam Speaker, we are very interested in continuing our work with Manitoba Teachers' Society and with individual teachers, school trustees, parent councils, who all have a stake in this very, very important investment. That's why we've launched—that's why we've increased investment in education as a government, by over \$400 million more than the NDP ever did.

And, Madam Speaker, we're motivated at home. We're motivated by the fact that we are, in this caucus, the husband of a teacher, a former teacher, a former teacher, the child of a teacher. We are, all of us, connected to the education system, and all of us understand the vital importance of empowering the

teaching profession and getting better outcomes for our children in our school system.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to moving forward with oral questions, we have a guest that I would like to introduce to you.

Seated in the loge to my left we have Doug Martindale, the former MLA for Burrows, and we all welcome him here to the Manitoba Legislature.

* (14:10)

Number of Children in Care Standards for Counting

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Today we learned about the many system failures that led to the tragic death of Tina Fontaine. I remember well the vigil that was held to mark her life, when thousands of Winnipeggers stood together because our hearts were broken at her loss and the loss for her family. We all share in their deep grief and hope for healing.

We have a collective moral responsibility to address the issue of children in care. The first five recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are dedicated to the subject of reducing the number of children in care.

This government has said that the number of children in CFS has dropped for the first time in years. However, it emerged that it may be because they changed the way children are counted. The government counted 10,776, while agencies counted 11,143. This difference is deeply worrying. If there are two different standards for counts, it is a virtual guarantee that someone will fall through the cracks.

Can the Premier explain why there are two different ways of counting children in care?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The priorities that were addressed today, Madam Speaker, are not just priorities of the children's advocate. They are priorities of the leader of the opposition and his caucus. They are priorities of this government and our members, and I hope that they are the priorities of the Liberal Party of Manitoba as well.

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

Children in CFS Care Canada Child Benefit Clawback

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, this government has announced block funding for CFS that appears to deliver a significant cut. It turns out the government is taking tens of millions of dollars from the Canada child benefit for children in care just as the previous government did.

This is not the government's money. This is supposed to be a non-taxable benefit that this government is taking, using it to reduce their costs and clawing back \$27 million. In opposition, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) said that when the previous government did it, it was immoral.

We all know it's essential to reform the child-welfare system and it is critical to get it right.

Why is this government clawing back funds just when we need to invest in change?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, again, I have to encourage the member, whose first question was about accuracy in figures, to get accurate in his figures. We're—over \$200 million of additional investment in the Department of Families. That is hardly a cut by any estimation or by any definition.

I just encourage the member in his preamble to attempt to be accurate and to be consistent with his previous preamble.

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

Mr. Lamont: It's worth noting that the state of mental health care in this province is so poor, especially for children, that parents may have to voluntarily place their children in the care of CFS. Sometimes this is unpaid care so that children may still be living with their parents. Even in these cases, this PC government is taking their Canada child benefit.

Madam Speaker, families with children with serious mental health crises and special needs are forced to give up their Canada child-care benefit payment for treatment. This is preying on some of the most vulnerable families and children of the province.

Is this government going to stop the practice of pocketing the child—Canada child benefit, especially for children in unpaid care?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, we have been proactive in working very effectively, I believe, with the federal government on a number of issues related to the topic the member has raised, in terms of things like housing, child protection.

But I have to say that federal governments, not just the current Liberal government, but others as well that preceded it, have been, I think, lacking in their willingness to support communities on the important issues that this report today does address, and I think that we need to work together to encourage better partnerships and fuller financial support and participation by the federal government in this area of joint responsibility.

The Jordan principle can be abided by, Madam Speaker, but it will continually be put onto provincial governments when a federal government is not addressing fully its responsibilities. That is what we need in this country. We need a federal government that addresses its constitutional responsibilities in respect of First Nations people on reserves, and it is not doing that now nor has it throughout our history as a country.

Mediation Services Labour Disruption Concerns

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): The minister's attack on working people continues. There's been labour peace in Manitoba for a generation exactly because the current system that's in place works to mediate labour disputes.

Currently, when employers and workers hit an impasse, the government—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —supplies mediators that help the parties come to an agreement.

But the minister has now foolishly ended much of the service, making it harder for workers, harder for employees, to resolve disputes.

Why is the minister undoing important mediation services that we have here in Manitoba?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Well, the member—Madam Speaker, the member mentioned a labour peace within the province, and that's why there's been a significant decline in the number of requests in—over

the past few years. It's a sign that there is good labour-management relations in Manitoba.

There are a number of other provinces that charge significantly higher fees for labour-management services. And I should remind the member that the current NDP government in Alberta uses the private sector.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Lindsey: It's clear this government doesn't want a good working relationship with labour or working people.

They've eliminated the department of labour; they've eliminated the advisory committee on workplace safety and health; cut automatic certification; weakened child labour laws; froze minimum wage for two years; interfered in the 'collective' bargaining process at the U of M; imposed wage 'freezes' on—wage freezes on Manitoba workers through unconstitutional legislation.

Now they intend to contract out mediation services and push the costs onto workers.

I ask the minister: Why is he setting the stage for labour disruptions in Manitoba?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, the member talks about attacks on workers. I think a PST increase to 8 per cent and broadening is attack on workers. I believe that increasing and endorsing a carbon tax on Manitobans is attack on workers. It affects fuel, home heating costs. That's an attack on workers.

And besides that, this member continually advocates for the end of the resource harvesting because he wants everything to be left in the ground. How will that help workers in northern Manitoba?

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

Mr. Lindsey: I can see part of the problem: the minister's clearly confused.

The minister's consistently cut standards that protect workers and ripped up the rights of workers in Manitoba. If the minister cared about labour peace and well-being of workers, he wouldn't eliminate chief prevention officer, as he's announced yesterday, and he wouldn't make it harder for workers to seek protection from a bad employer, as

he did, again, yesterday. But the minister is ideologically blinded and he can't see that.

Why is this minister only interested in the bottom line instead of what will keep workers and businesses strong in this province?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate any question from an NDP member on making life harder for workers, Madam Speaker, because the member opposite advocated—his party has advocated against mineral resource development; advocating for higher taxes on travel, tourism, transport—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —advocating for a death tax, Madam Speaker; advocating for a professionals tax that will make it harder to keep doctors in our province.

They are in a rough position over there, Madam Speaker, and the member for Flin Flon is in an especially rough position because he's also supporting a carbon tax that will impose additional burdens on people in the North. He is supporting higher taxes. He may not care about the money, but the people who live in his riding do and they don't like higher taxes. And they don't support the concept of eliminating secret ballots for workers either, Madam Speaker.

Ambulance Fee Reduction Government Election Promise

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Madam Speaker, after 17 years of NDP government, 17 years of NDP mismanagement, 17 years of rising fees and rising taxes, ambulance fees were at an all-time high—among the highest in all of Canada, in fact: over \$500.

Madam Speaker, when we released our latest budget—and what a budget it is—we continued to take action. We continued to take action on our promise to reduce ambulance fees.

So my question is for the Minister of Health. Can he please update—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —this House on how we are keeping our promises, how we are giving Manitobans a break and how we are getting the job done?

* (14:20)

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for Radisson for that question.

As the member has said, not only was the legacy of the NDP years and years of higher deficits and higher taxes and more debt added to the books, but the legacy was also some of the highest ambulance fees in all of Canada: over \$500.

Our government made a commitment to lower those ambulance fees, to stand on the side of Manitobans. In this budget, we've met that commitment. On April the 1st, that number will fall to \$250: cut in half, on behalf of all Manitobans. Madam Speaker, this is in addition to 60 paramedic new jobs and 65 new ambulances. It is promise made, promise kept.

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

Children's Advocate Report Implementation of Recommendations

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Today the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth released a report called A Place Where it Feels Like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine.

Madam Speaker, too often we've seen—we see our indigenous children lost to us because of failings within the system meant to keep them safe. We have seen time and time again, reports and recommendations calling for changes to the child-welfare system that are never fully implemented.

Again, for the record, what is this minister doing to ensure that the recommendations of this report do not merely sit and gather dust on the shelf?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Again, I just want to emphasize the fact that we very much appreciate the work that the children's advocate has done in terms of these recommendations. We think it's important to take action on these types of items.

If you look at our experience with the Phoenix Sinclair recommendations, we implemented more than 90 per cent, Madam Speaker, 90 per cent of the recommendations since coming to office.

So our track record suggests that we want to make sure that youth are supported, vulnerable Manitobans are supported. We've introduced child-welfare reforms.

We're going to—implementing policies that will help impact early learning and—rather, early

intervention and prevention, to make sure that vulnerable children are supported.

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

Indigenous Children in Care Support Services Needed

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, we know that the system fails my people in many ways. One such failure was the lack of counselling and support services to be able to be received by Tina. And I quote: Fuck it. I'm out. See you all whenever.

I have two suicides back home. My friend, Donald Baxter *[phonetic]* hung himself last night. I should've told him how much I cared.

Can this minister ensure that my people, especially my children in care, receive the support services they need when they need it?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I want to truly thank the member for her comments and her experiences. I know how passionate she is about the child-welfare system. We were up in Thompson together, when we did our consultations, and so, I really appreciate what you're saying and how passionate you are about making sure vulnerable children are supported.

And that's really what this government wants to do: we want to address the child-welfare issues.

We want to make sure that vulnerable individuals, vulnerable children, have homes, not hotels.

We think that supporting earlier intervention and prevention before the child—before they get into the child-welfare system is part of the answer, Madam Speaker, and we want to work with all parties to make sure vulnerable children are supported.

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding with the next question, I would just like to remind members that using swear words in the House, even if quoting from a source, is not allowed in this Chamber.

The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Klassen: Many indigenous people have long been wary of the CFS system, wondering if any child will ever see their own home again. I know many have passed on before they were ever returned home.

According to the Manitoba advocate, Manitoba continues to lack safe and secure placement resources for children who are at risk of imminent harm or death.

When we fail to protect our children, who are at the highest risk of harm from addictions, sexual exploitation or crime, can we really say we're truly looking out for their best?

Madam Speaker, I apologize, but it had to be said. I had to. That's the real. That's what I deal with.

Will this minister commit to implementing all the recommendations of this report and others that aim to keep children in care safe, happy and alive?

Mr. Fielding: You, by all means, don't have to apologize for the passion you bring about the child-children in care here in the province of Manitoba. Supporting vulnerable children isn't something this side of the House or the other side of the House—any side of the House—is opposed to. I think everyone wants to make sure we're supporting vulnerable children.

We're absolutely committed to addressing the child-welfare system in the province of Manitoba that we inherited. We want to make sure that children are supported.

That's why we've introduced things like The Protecting Children Act as one of our first things in government, to make—to ensure systems speak to each other; customary care to ensure that culture is a part of any child welfare—well-being; as well as the child-welfare reform, which we think should focus on early intervention and prevention before they get in the child-welfare system in and itself; to make sure people are supported once they leave the child-welfare system, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) The budget of the northern regional health authority has been slashed by over \$8 million, which has negatively affected doctor retention programs and the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

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

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

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

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

(8) There has been no commitment from the provincial government that mothers—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: (8) There has been no commitment from the provincial government that mothers and their escorts who have to travel to The Pas will be covered by the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reinstate obstetric delivery services at Flin Flon General Hospital and work with the government of Saskatchewan and the federal government to ensure

obstetric services continue to be available on a regional basis.

* (14:30)

This petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Cindy Henderson, Dwayne [inaudible]–Ballard and many other Flin Flon–Manitobans.

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

Daylight Saving Time

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The loss of sleep associated with the beginning of daylight savings time has serious consequences for physical and mental health and has been linked to the increases in traffic accidents and workplace injuries.

(2) According to a Manitoba Public Insurance news release, collision data collect in 2014 showed that there were 20 per cent increase in collisions on Manitoba roadways following the spring daylight savings time change, which—when compared to all other Mondays in 2014.

(3) Daylight savings time is associated with a decrease in productivity the days after the clocks are turned forward, with no corresponding increase in productivity when clocks are turned back.

(4) There is no conclusive evidence that daylight savings time is effective in reducing energy consumption.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to amend The Official Time Act to abolish daylight savings time in Manitoba, effective November 4th, 2019, resulting in Manitoba remaining on Central Standard Time throughout the year and in perpetuity.

And this petition has been signed by Sandra Friesen, Gord Klippenstein, Jack Penner and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Dog Overpopulation in Northern Communities

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Many Manitobans are deeply concerned about the safety of northern, isolated communities in the province owing to an exploding overpopulation rate of dogs.

(2) The current overpopulation of dogs is increasingly alarming to front-line rescuers, who witness the severe, difficult and heartbreaking conditions experienced by northern dogs, including starvation, extreme weather conditions, attacks by wild animals and acts of animal cruelty.

(3) As a result of non-existent veterinarian services in most, if not all, northern communities, dogs are not adequately cared for, to no fault of the communities or their members.

(4) Roaming dogs are often sick, injured and alone, with no one to advocate for their care, and Manitoba's animal welfare organizations are often the only ones sounding the alarm in this present crisis.

(5) Time and time again, front-line rescuers witness northern families who, with no access to veterinary care, watch their beloved dog perish from injuries or diseases which would have—which would be easily preventable with better access to veterinarian services.

(6) This present crisis poses a serious and immediate risk to citizens, in particular, children in northern communities, with the threat of pack maulings.

(7) Many Manitobans and front-line rescuers are current lobbying for stronger animal welfare laws, alongside provincial regulations for animal rescue organizations in partnership with adequate veterinarian services and education for northern communities.

(8) Currently, vaccination rates for owned dogs in Winnipeg is 70 per cent, while in northern, isolated communities, the rate is less than 5 per cent as a direct result of this current lack of access to veterinarian services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately commit to addressing the overpopulation of dogs in Manitoba, more specifically, in northern communities, by humanely removing and re-homing unwanted dogs.

(2) To urge the provincial government, in partnership with animal welfare agencies, the Manitoba veterinarian medical association, MVMA, front-line rescues and the federal government to immediately develop a provincial strategy to spay and neuter dogs, while providing access to veterinarian services for owned dogs in northern communities, ensuring the safety of communities and their citizens.

Signed by many Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): First, I'd like to announce that pursuant to rule 33(7), that the private member's resolution be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), and the title of this resolution is FleetNet Replacement.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 33(7), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for La Verendrye, and the title of the resolution is FleetNet Replacement.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, could you please resume debate on the budget, please?

BUDGET DEBATE

(Third Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires), who has 19 minutes remaining.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It is a pleasure to be able to stand up today and put a few words on the record about our budget and the historic investments in Manitoba that my colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), had released last week.

Before I had concluded my remarks yesterday, as I was getting started, I followed the Leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba and his comments on the budget, where he did note, when he was talking about our government's commitments to our Climate and Green Plan that is highlighted in this budget, he said that the only thing of substance in our Climate and Green Plan prior to was the implementation of a carbon tax. And I just want to reiterate for the record that that is the Liberal Leader's position, that he would much prefer a carbon tax, a tax on hard-working Manitobans, as opposed to, for example, \$102-million historic investment in a Conservation Trust which will see the implementation of, at least, a minimum of \$5 million every year, each and every year in perpetuity, to flow to communities throughout Manitoba for investments in green infrastructure or 'nashval' assets.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We are incredibly proud of this initiative. And this initiative—we are going to announce our signature projects. There are some really amazing projects that are coming to fruition through the Conservation Trust, but of significance are a few that we've highlighted that were very successful. They stood out among all the rest that will receive funding this year, in the inaugural tranche of investments that will see natural infrastructure in the province of Manitoba enhanced.

And I look forward to making those announcements on—within the next couple of days with my colleagues and people from across the province, who are interested in the rehabilitation of our natural infrastructure.

But, of course, to the Liberals, they would rather see a carbon tax than such investments in Manitoba.

We also have a \$40 million green fund that is announced in this budget. That is money that will go towards infrastructure projects, as well as investments in ensuring that we all adapt to a low carbon future and move towards adaptation and mitigation measures. So we're really excited about those and more announcements to come in the near future.

We also did announce a shared funding program with the federal government last year, the Low Carbon Economy Fund. And projects are going to start to roll. Indeed, from our end, we are certainly ready to start to invest money through the Low Carbon Economy Fund, and really hopeful that our

partnership with the federal government is in keeping with some of the commitments that we've received from them verbally. And I look forward to making announcements from that Low Carbon Economy Fund in very near future.

But this budget, apart from highlighting some of the really great investments in adaptation and mitigation for our—lowering to—or moving to a lower carbon economy and ensuring that we are all reducing our carbon emissions, we—there were significant investments in this budget that were announced that are of great interest to many of the families that I represent in Riel.

A study came out a few weeks ago that showed the constituents that I represent—in fact, over 50 per cent of my constituents have less than \$200 on the kitchen table at the end of the month. And that is \$200 in which they have to decide how to put their children in extracurricular activities—on the kitchen table, yes—I'm confirming for the Minister of Education, wondering where folks in Riel keep their money, and it is often, indeed, on the kitchen table.

* (14:40)

When it's only \$200, it doesn't last very long, unfortunately. So we want to put more money in that stack, in their pockets, so that families don't have to make the sacrifice between what do I buy this month? Do I buy those basketball shoes for my son so he can play in school sports and in extracurricular sports, or do I buy those extra groceries? Or: I have a child who's going to a birthday party, and how am I going to be able to afford a birthday party gift to send with my child?

These are decisions—these are choices that my families make on a regular basis. And so we're very pleased that through the reduction of the PST, we will be putting an extra \$500 a year on the kitchen table for many of these families—families who have been struggling for a very long time. And this budget was great news for those families, indeed, to know that they will be getting roughly about an extra \$500 a year so that they can move forward with some of those initiatives that they want to move forward with.

The other thing I'd heard significantly from my constituents after the release of our budget was the importance of a government keeping its word. I had so many people come up to me and say how refreshing it is to see a government that kept its word

on reducing the PST. We'd made the commitment during our election campaign, well before we'd formed government, that we would reduce that PST by one point. And—in stark contrast to the former NDP government, who had said to people in my constituency and throughout the province in the 2011 campaign that they would not raise their taxes, only to go and not only raise their taxes the next year, but also take away their right to vote on a referendum about the—such major tax increases.

And so many of the constituents that I represent had said to me time and time again how egregious that was. How egregious it was—not just the PST increase, but it was how it was brought in and then how it was poorly justified to them.

At one point, they were told that it was for increased costs for—due to a flood. In other cases, then, there was a flip-flop and it was used to justify enhancements in infrastructure. And the excuses and the reasonings just kept piling on and, ultimately, constituents knew that it was just—pure dishonesty is what they were being faced with. And they wanted to have a government and a representative that would keep their word on matters like this. And so it was of great interest and great relief to many of the families that I represent to know that they would be getting a break on their taxes this year.

We have also raised the basic personal exemption and we are taking 3,800 Manitobans who are low income off the tax rolls and allow Manitobans to keep an extra \$38 million in their pockets over the next year by raising the basic personal exemption. This, too, was incredibly important for the many constituents that I represent and the many people throughout Manitoba who are struggling week to week, month to month.

And we've heard from some people that raising the personal basic exemption, lowering the taxes weren't what they would have preferred to see us do. Now let me point out that anybody that I've ever met who have said it's okay to keep taxes high and it's okay to not index the basic personal exemption to inflation or to lower that basic personal exemption—these are people of means. These are people who have never had to make the choice between putting food on the table or keeping the lights on in their house.

And—so, of course, the choice for them to say, you know what, I'd prefer to pay a little extra—higher in taxes for a variety of projects to have—be funded in the province of Manitoba, doesn't matter to me.

These are people that have never had to make those hard choices about how to spend their discretionary income at the end of the month. And the people that I hold near and dear in my heart are the ones that have said to me we have choices to make every month, and when you help put more money on our kitchen table, when you lower our taxes, when you're invested in the sustainability of our province's finances, that is what gives me hope, because I know that my children and my grandchildren will be able to live, work and prosper in the province of Manitoba based on these principles. And so those were some of the things that I was incredibly proud of in this year's budget.

The other aspect that I wanted to highlight was an investment—an additional investment of \$325,000 for victim services to support initiatives like Candace House and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, who do absolutely incredible work to help end sexploitation and abuse of children—not just here in Manitoba, but around the world.

And it is sad that we do need a centre like the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to be committed to investing and committed to doing work to end the exploitation, the sexploitation, the online abuse and other abuses of children in our community. And it is very sad that we do need an organization, but we are very grateful for the work that they do to protect children who are abused and being exploited here in Manitoba and around the world, and I do want to give a special heartfelt thanks to everybody at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

I recently was—toured that operation, and the work that these people do is probably some of the most heartbreaking work anyone can do, going online and recovering images of children who have been abused and photographed while being abused, and then having those images online in perpetuity can do horrific, horrific damage to a child as that child grows older.

And I met the team of people who do work, and they have an amazing tool that can scour the Internet and find these images and take them down permanently, but unfortunately, there's—there are people that have to actually physically inspect these photographs and be—to view them. And my heart goes out to them because that is gut-wrenching work and certainly not for the faint of heart.

And so I commend them for the work that they do each and every day. They stand tall and with

courage and tenacity because they know that the work that they're doing is saving children's lives and is so important. So I was really pleased to see the executive director from Canadian Centre for Child Protection here when we delivered our Throne Speech and very pleased that our budget provided additional money for that entity.

And other highlights of our budget include more money than ever for health care. And we know that the facts are that our government is spending \$6.2 billion in health care this year, including reserving \$20 million more for addictions and mental health. This was the largest health increase. It was a—the largest health-care budget in the Province's history.

There has never been such significant investments in health care than what our government did, and I'm incredibly proud of the work that the former Health minister and the current Health Minister has done and continue to do to ensure that we have a health-care system that is sustainable for our future generations.

There were so many other highlights of the budget, particularly in the area of adapting to low-carbon future and for our initiatives to preserve our natural resources, and yesterday I had the pleasure of announcing a program where we are going to be buying back quota from commercial fishers. We know that we have a yield right now. We have quota of about 7.6 million kilograms of quota coming off of Lake Winnipeg every year. This is from the three species on Lake Winnipeg. We have moved forward with quota entitlement buyback. We're hoping to bring the yield down to about 5.63 million kilograms of quota each year. We think that that would ensure a sustainable fishery.

We've heard many people in the province be concerned about—express concern about the sustainability of our fisheries, and so we are very proud to move forward with some initiatives to ensure the sustainability of our fisheries now and into future generations.

Last week I also had the honour and the privilege of working with the MLA for Lac du Bonnet as we announced—we—a partnership with four First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and we are exploring indigenous-led forestry development, and it was a real honour to stand side by side with Keith Barker from Hollow Water and other leaders in our community who are just excited about the economic opportunities that

they may have for their communities through this forestry initiative and through other initiatives.

I also do want to highlight some investments that we've made recently in francophone affairs. We did recently sign the Canada-Manitoba Agreement on French Language Services. We did want to increase that envelope significantly and to work in a greater partnership with the federal government on an enhanced French language services agreement.

The federal government held the line at their level of funding. We agreed to what they were willing to offer and we signed that agreement. But we know that our investments in French language services will be multiplied exponentially from the—what the federal is committing. And it's unfortunate that we do not have a full funding partner in the federal government when it comes to French language services, but our government is moving forward with enhanced services.

*(14:50)

We also announced \$900,000 for a francophone daycare at the University of St. Boniface and a child-care centre of excellence for them, as well as a \$16 million expansion of the École Noël-Ritchot. Those are just a few significant investments that our government had made prior to this budget, and this budget builds on some of that significant work.

And so with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was very pleased to be able to put some of the words—some words on the record about this historic budget; a budget that is putting more money back in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans; more money in health care and more money in education, to name just a few. Very pleased to have the opportunity to provide these comments.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm pleased to speak in support of the very reasonable amendment that's been put forward by my leader, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew).

You know, I was moved, as I often am, by not one, but two speeches that the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) made. The first was a very passionate speech, just on Friday about his own experience and the need to protect health care in this province. But even yesterday when the member for Concordia got up and talked about the budget, he spoke about, in a reasonable democratic society, the limits there

should be on exactly what you declare to be true or untrue.

And the member for Concordia then, quite correctly, wanted to call out the practice of certain members on the other side of the House, who declare things to be fake news, even when they're things contained in the government's own budget documents, of the budget we're debating.

And I really thought, after the member had spoken, I noticed this one—this literary passage had been in my head. And I've recalled exactly which one it is. When I was in grade 10, studying International Baccalaureate English at Silver Heights Collegiate, Gail Roberts had us study a book called 1984, written by George Orwell. And in that book, the protagonist is a fellow named Winston Smith who is actually a civil servant. And he worked in the Ministry of Plenty, and I quote from that book: As short a time ago as February, the Ministry of Plenty had issued a promise, a categorical pledge with the official words that there would be no reduction of the chocolate ration during 1984.

Actually, as Winston was aware, the chocolate ration was to be reduced from 30 grams to 20 at the end of the present week. All that was needed was a substitute for the original promise, a warning that would probably be necessary to reduce the ration at some time in April.

But what happened in that case is that, the people, the masses, were given an unqualified guarantee, much like there will be no cuts to front-line services.

And in 1984 the written word was redacted so that it appeared that the promise was never made, or else that it was somehow conditional and, even worse, what should've an occasion of shame in that book, was turned into a triumph of planning by the powers that be.

And I'll continue this quote from 1984: The new ration did not start until tomorrow and Winston had only four cigarettes left. For the moment, he had shut his eyes to the motor noises and was listening to the stuff that streamed out of the telescreen. It appeared that there had even been demonstrations to thank Big Brother for raising the chocolate ration to 20 grams a week.

And only yesterday, he reflected, it had been announced that the ration was to be reduced to 20 grams a week. Was it possible that they could swallow that, after only 24 hours? The eyeless

creature at the other table swallowed it fanatically, passionately, with a furious desire to track down, denounce and vaporize anyone who should suggest that last week the ration had been 30 grams. Was he then alone in the possession of the memory?

Well, how true George Orwell's words in 1984 are, for a government which is trying to claim that in the budget that we are now debating, that they have somehow increased spending on health in the province of Manitoba. Because it is abundantly clear that nothing could be further from the truth.

And we look in the budget, that the 2018-19 budget featured Health, Seniors and Active Living spending of 6 billion, 771 million dollars. We know that there was underspending of almost a quarter billion dollars during the year, and now in the 2019-20 budget, the budget for Health, Seniors and Active Living is 6 billion, 651 million dollars.

As my colleague, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), pointed out in a question just the other day: I don't understand why the members opposite cannot seem to understand that 6 billion, 651 million is \$120 million less than 6 billion 771 million.

The only explanation one can give is that, much as the people of Oceania were under the guidance of Big Brother, the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, who are trying to deny what is contained in their own budget papers, well, perhaps they're doing the bidding of their very own Big Brother in this House.

And Winston Smith, of course, questions himself when he sees this. He says, well, what if I'm the only one that has this memory? Well, thankfully, the member for Concordia's (Mr. Wiebe) not the only one that has the memory of a promise not to cut front-line services.

This member for Minto is not the only one in Manitoba who has a memory of a government promising in the last election not to cut front-line services. There are hundreds of thousands of Manitobans who remember what the now-Premier said on the campaign trail, what his candidates said in the campaign trail, and they know that they've been betrayed by this Premier (Mr. Pallister) by cutting health-care services to the quick. And there are so many areas to talk about in health care, I'm not going to be able to touch them all—something my friend, the member from Concordia said the other day.

Before I get on to some specifics, I do, though, want to put on the record something that's very important, and right here in this Chamber I want to thank Rachel Notley of Alberta and John Horgan of BC, who managed the two fastest-growing economies in Canada, for providing this reduction in the provincial sales tax.

And you know, for a Premier who spends his time telling us little vignettes, these Damon Runyonesque stories about pulling yourself up by your bootstraps and working hard and leaving money on the kitchen table, the only reason that this government is able to show any progress on any front is the fact that they are now receiving unprecedented revenues from the federal government, largely from equalization.

The sole fact that Manitoba's economy is sputtering along while other economies like Alberta, like British Columbia are powering ahead, has actually given this government a remarkable increase in transfers from the federal government.

And what do we know also from page 3 of the budget papers, which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and the Minister of Health are—were selectively quoting from the other day? Well, we know that year over year federal transfers in Manitoba have gone up by \$319 million. And, you know, it's amazing. When you look at the budget papers, there's a lot of things that you can shake out of those papers that are very, very helpful. And I would turn members opposite to page 59 of the budget document and, of course, you can see very carefully what has happened over the past 10 years.

We saw a time when federal government transfers—major federal transfers, as they're called on page 59, to the province of Manitoba were flat and, in fact, those transfers in 2014-15 were exactly the same as they were in 2009-2010. Per capita, of course, the number actually went down, as Manitoba's population increased with the tremendous immigration, with more young people staying at home in that last decade, without even considering the reducing value of money because of inflation.

So what do we see now? Now, in '19-20 or 2019-2020, this provincial government is actually receiving 24 per cent more federal transfer dollars than were received by the government in 2014-2015, which actually is almost \$900 million. Imagine what a New Democrat government could have done with 900 million additional dollars from the federal government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Swan: Well, I see that I've woken up the members opposite. I know when I started talking about a book they haven't read, they got confounded. They may be googling it to try to see what's going on.

But I'll tell you what; a New Democratic government that was the beneficiary of another \$900 million in revenue from federal government would not have closed the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, would not have closed the emergency room at Victoria General Hospital, and would not now be on the verge of throwing Winnipeg's emergency services into chaos by closing the emergency rooms at Concordia Hospital and Seven Oaks hospital.

* (15:00)

And I know I'm going to be delighted to hear what the folks on the other side have to say. The fact is that despite being bailed out, thanks to our NDP friends in Alberta, in British Columbia, this government has hacked and slashed without really managing anything.

It's clear to everybody that this government's priority when it comes to health care is not better care for Manitobans. Their goal is to cut cost. Well, we know it. New Democrat supporters know it. Liberal supporters—I'm not sure any of them are listening right now—I think agree with that. Even Progressive Conservative supporters and polls that have been done, they will admit that yes, actually it's not about patient care, it's about cutting cost. So that is, I suppose, why we've seen an attack on health-care facilities, an attack on health-care workers and, most importantly, most tragically, an attack on patients and their families.

So what do we know? Well, in this budget there's going to be a cut to health capital funding by \$7.2 million. Fewer investments in things like new diagnostic machines. No investments in personal-care-home beds and new primary care clinics.

We learned just a couple of days ago that this government has cut the primary health care budget, which has required the shuttering of the Family Medical Centre, which is now going to result in less preventative care for Manitobans, and less convenient attendances by people who may have a health care issue, to be admitted quickly to the St. Boniface general hospital.

We know this government received money from the federal government for mental health and addictions services. We've seen absolutely no action. I asked the Health Minister, and then I asked the Finance Minister in Estimates last year what they were going to be doing with this additional money from the federal government. They had no answer. There was no answer last year and there is still no answer in this budget.

We know, of course, this government's failed to build a single personal-care-home bed in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. We also know that there are dangerous wait times in ERs. And, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) uses whatever numbers suit him to try to pretend they're making progress.

The fact of the matter is that there was a decrease in ER wait times. That began in about nine— in about 2015, when the new Oculys computer system that the NDP government brought to Manitoba was operating. And, in fact, the new government was able to take advantage of that for approximately a year, and we're actually seeing wait times declining.

That came to a sudden stop and, in fact, a sudden reversal in the fall of 2017. What happened in 2017? Well, the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre closed, meaning that most people who live in the area will now go to Health Sciences Centre and clog up the emergency room. We know that at that time, this government closed the Victoria emergency room, which then sent more people going to emergency rooms that were not physically able and not properly staffed to handle those people. And, since then, we have seen the ER wait times going up month after month after month.

We've heard a lot from understaffed and overworked nurses. The Minister of Health will stand up and say, well, but everything must be fine because overtime is down. Well, overtime is down for one reason and one reason only. Many hospitals and many other facilities have now issued edicts that there will be no additional nurses brought in until there's a second vacancy on a unit on any given shift.

So the first nurse that is sick or is ill or can't make it in is not going to be replaced. That is a fact. What happens then is, when nurses get the call at home, many of them don't want to come in and work overtime because they know they're going to be coming in to a unit that is already short staffed.

And nurses also fear, depending on the nature of their work, that they might have mandated overtime. Which is exactly what's happened at St. Boniface Hospital, which has happened at other facilities where nurses show up, they work their eight hour shift or their 12-hour shift and, at the end of their shift, their supervisor comes to them and says, I'm sorry, you can't go home. We don't have anybody coming in to replace you, to look after children in the 'neonatal' intensive care unit. You're going to have to stay. And that's not right.

We know just now that cardiac surgeries at St. Boniface general hospital—the centre of excellence in this province—well, we know that surgeries have been cancelled, for some patients over and over and over again.

We know this government has closed preventative primary-care clinics. We know that this government has chosen to reduce the number of nursing student positions at Red River College, which just harkens back to the last time there was a Conservative government in power, they're going back to the same old, tired playbook.

We need to put the brakes on these cuts and closures and shift the focus to prevention, making sure people get the care they need, but also working to make sure that people don't need urgent care in the first place; and I could spend the rest of the time talking about health care, but there are so many things to talk about.

I'm going to speak just briefly about education. We know that this government has underfunded education since they've come to power both from K to 12, but also in the post-secondary system.

I know, representing a riding in the heart of Winnipeg, I know how hard teachers work and I know Winnipeg School Division, there are a lot of challenges. There's a lot of students who require English as an additional language, something we used to call English as a second language until we realized that many children speak two or three languages, one of them just may not happen to be English.

We know in Winnipeg School Division there are an above-average number of students that might have other challenges, that might be living with an FASD, that might have attention deficit disorder, that may have other issues with literacy or numeracy, and the Winnipeg School Division has done its best to rise to the challenge to try to provide for children with

exceptional needs to make sure that they're able to be integrated into the class, to make sure they're able to do as well as they can in school with the hope that they will graduate. They will graduate and they will then be able to join the workforce, whether as a full worker or in some kind of assisted system.

It is tragic that this government's freezing and cutting of funds to school divisions it making it harder and harder for school divisions like Winnipeg to get that done.

Just last night the Winnipeg School Division met and they were given an ultimatum by the Minister of Education. He told them if you continue to fund—even at a lower rate than last year—if you continue to fund these positions that are necessary to assist teachers in the classroom, to assist getting extra resources to kids who need help, we're going to penalize you; we're going to punish you, and we're going to pull more money out of your budget.

The school trustees in Winnipeg School Division last night voted to accept cuts because they did not want to be further penalized by this provincial government. But it is a fact that the Winnipeg School Division tried repeatedly to get the Minister of Education to the table to have a meeting.

And, when they finally, out of frustration, went to social media to say we've tried to meet five times and this minister won't meet with us, well, what did he do? He sent out tweets; said, well, why are they doing this through the media? Well, it's embarrassing and it's shameful and it's going to hurt kids that I represent in this Legislature and it's going to hurt families that I represent in this Legislature and, frankly, there is no reason for it.

We also know that this government's making it harder and harder for students to stay in Manitoba and get their post-secondary education. In fact, it may be that there is not another group of Manitobans who are bearing the brunt of this government's cuts more than Manitoba's post-secondary students.

First of all, early on this government did away with the tuition fee tax rebate that many students had been relying on and hoping on, and, frankly, relying on as they build their life in Manitoba. Well, that's gone.

We know that this government froze minimum wage for two years and now they are only allowing minimum wage to increase by the rate of inflation.

Now, not everyone who earn minimum wage is a student. I want to make that abundantly clear, but many people who are students earn minimum wage or close to it. Yet at the same time, this government has removed the controls on how much universities can charge for tuition, and now tuition can rise by the rate of inflation plus 5 per cent, and that's exactly what Manitoba's universities have done, meaning that tuitions have been raised 6.6 per cent last year, and we're expecting a similar amount this year.

So, if students from modest homes, like in the West End, are now facing the prospect of having to work more hours—if that's possible in the summer—more hours while they're trying to get through school, and they are having to work harder and harder just to stay in the same place.

But what's even worse is that since 2017 not only has this government allowed universities to collect more tuition from students, this government has reduced investments in university—\$30 million since 2017 without even considering the number of students at the universities and without even considering the additional costs that universities and colleges have to bear. So this government is making it tougher and tougher for young people who want to stay in Manitoba, who want to build their life here in Manitoba. They're making it harder and harder to get there.

* (15:10)

Just the other day, my friend, the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino), asked the Minister of Education, who's responsible for immigration, about the \$500 head tax that this government has now put on people who want to come to Manitoba under the Provincial Nominee Program. And as my friend from Fort Garry-Riverview says, it was a very simple question. You're now imposing this \$500 tax on new immigrants. Where's the money going? And the minister, who usually has an answer for everything, did not have anything remotely connected to an answer.

Why would this government make it harder for people who want to come to Manitoba to start their lives over and enrich all of us?

Well, the same reason that they're cutting health care, the same reason they're cutting education, because their need for cuts is more important than looking after the needs and the protections of people who live in the province of Manitoba. That's why the amendment that was provided by my leader, the

member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), makes sense and shows how this budget has neglected the priorities of Manitobans. I'll be supporting this amendment. I'll be voting against a hard-hearted budget that is bringing Manitoba—

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

House Business

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, could you please canvass the House to see if there's an agreement to waive rule 30, subsection (2), so that the official opposition will be entitled to all three opposition day—opposition days each session for the remainder of the 41st legislature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On House business, is it okay for the canvass—to canvass the House to make up sub-waive rule 30, sub (2), so that the official opposition will be entitled to all three opposition days each session for the remainder of 41st legislature?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

It's—access. Leave's denied. Okay.

* * *

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Mr. Deputy Speaker, a rather amusing attempt there by the opposition to get as much as they can, but that might not be a surprise.

I want to talk about the budget this afternoon. I want to talk about things that have gone down and things that have gone up. This is of interest not only to those of us who are professional politicians, but to all Manitobans. These are very real things. Of course, budgets are not about numbers, they're about vision, they're about people, they're about the future of our province as well as, of course, its current state.

So let's talk about a few things that have gone down. While I'm very grateful to report, and I know that many are grateful to hear in my home constituency of Rossmere that ambulance fees have gone down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will come as no surprise to you that we ran on this. We said that the ambulance fees were too high. We said we would reduce them. Promise made, promise kept. We've

delivered on that promise. Ambulance fees are down, they're half of what they used to be, and you know that is good news for Manitobans.

Another thing that's gone down, of course, people are waiting for me to say this, I'm just going to say it right away, the PST is coming down, as well. Long overdue, it should not have been raised in the first place. But what does that mean? What does it mean—the PST is coming down?

I mean, of course, that means that someone in an office somewhere will make these things happen, but for ordinary people, this tax relief means something substantial. It's estimated that an individual will save something like \$180 a year, and when I say save, I mean that's real money back in their pocket. This isn't some kind of sleight of hand savings that is only realized by those with a mathematical prowess to sort of recover the money if they know how to play the rules. No. This is real money that is not coming to the government. This is real money that will stay in the wallets, on the kitchen tables of taxpayers. That's good news.

Now, if you multiply that out to a family of four, of course, let's just assume you've got two parents and two kids, and what you find is that that family is estimated to save approximately \$500 a year. Hey, that's real money; that's not nothing. That's a cellphone bill, that's your child being able to attend soccer or whatever the case may be. These mean—these numbers mean something to people on the receiving end. And to those who might say, well, no, no, no, I'd actually rather pay that 1 per cent, we'd certainly take your donations. As a government, I'm sure that would be fine. But I don't think that is the case for those who are in a tight spot. I think that is the people who are counting their pennies are grateful for \$500 a year. That is good news and that is news that we're happy to deliver.

Another thing that's down, Madam Speaker: ER wait times.

If you look at the—sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I didn't mean to call you Madam Speaker there. I'm used to it and I know that she is often in that Chair.

Wait times are down. If you follow the graphs going back to 2015 and '16 and you trace them to today, there are some blips, yes. That is to be expected because of flu season and other occasional things that do happen, but the overall trend continues to be that ER wait times are down. We can also report that other wait times are down. MRI wait

times are down and with investments for hip and knee surgeries, as well as cataract surgeries, we know that Manitobans will not need to wait for as long to get access to those medical services which they need.

Thankfully, I've not had to go through a hip or a knee or a cataract situation in my own life but I do know people who have and I do know it's no laughing matter when you're in pain constantly, to be counting weeks and even months before you can get help, for that matter. I'm grateful that we have the technology to help people in this way and I'm also grateful that we're making investments so that those wait times are going to shrink.

Children in poverty is another thing that I think all of us on all sides of this House can celebrate as being down. Manitoba, in recent memory, was the child poverty capital of Canada. Not good news. Tenth out of 10. Happy to report that we are now in the middle of the pack. Not where we would like to be. Not where we used to be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is progress. This is to be celebrated. It needs to be noted. Children not only in poverty but children in care. The numbers of children in care have gone down. That also is good news and the first good news of its kind, I'm told, for over—in over 15 years.

There are other things going down, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Red tape is going down. Did you know that we inherited a legacy of nearly a million forms—nearly a million pieces of red tape, a million check boxes, a million signatures? A million things you had to fill out, file in, usually with a fee, by the way; drop off, get stamped, get sent back, get whatever it was copied or sent away or—now, I'm all for appropriate regulations. I'm all for safety regulations and we're all for those necessary checks and balances that responsible governments do to protect people.

What I'm not for and we're not for on this side of the House is that unnecessary bloated red tape culture that stymies up people trying to do a renovation or people trying to start a business or people trying to whatever the case may be.

And again, I want to be very clear. I'm not talking about the appropriate checks and balances for safety. I'm talking about the unnecessary stuff that we can get rid of and we are slowly getting rid of that red tape culture and people are thanking us for that.

Is it any wonder that private investment into any province, Manitoba is the highest? Is it any wonder that people are buying houses at a pretty good rate? Is it any wonder that people are taking risks and starting business in this province? No. Not when they find out it's a little bit easier than it used to be to take those kinds of risks, to invest those dollars and to do what they can to make a go of it and give things a try.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't include, on my list of things that have gone down, the deficit, which is more than half reduced from what it was in 2016. It had doubled in about six years or so, before 2016, but you know we are moving towards balance and that is a good thing. And you know, I'm even going to hazard that there are members on the opposite side who would agree that it is a good thing to have a balanced budget, that it is a healthy thing to have a balanced budget.

* (15:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, wait times for personal-care homes are down. Better management, careful co-ordination has enabled us to reduce the wait time for personal-care homes from a list that was several hundred people strong to now a list where we're talking about weeks and even sometimes days. I know of a situation in my own constituency where it was literally a matter of days a need came up and was addressed.

There was the appropriate conversations that were had and this individual got the help they needed in short order. That's how it should be. That's how it has not been. That's how it is now. We're taking solid, positive steps to see these things come down.

I also would be remiss if I didn't mention that the Provincial Nominee Program has also seen a decrease in the wait times that people have been waiting, often for their families to be reunited, I might add.

When we came into office, there was a backlog that spanned several years. People had waited for years to hear whether or not their qualifying relatives could come to Manitoba. This is in no one's best interest. It's not in the family's best interest because if you're a child, say eight years old, three years is a big part of your life.

And these numbers have come down. We have eliminated the backlog and now people are getting answers to those questions in a matter of months,

often somewhere around six months and frequently sooner than that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a lot of things coming down and I think that I can perceive across the aisle members listening carefully and saying, you know, maybe this Progressive Conservative government is actually getting something right. And I think they might conceal their support with some feigned laughter or whatever the case may be but, you know—

An Honourable Member: Nervous laughter.

Mr. Micklefield: As a colleague is saying, possibly nervous laughter.

So, having spoken about things which are going down, I'd like to talk about things which are going up. Well, the number of new ambulances in our province has gone up: 65 new ambulances. Number of paramedics has gone up: 60 more paramedics. And I—let me just say this again: I welcome somebody to sit down with me and I'd love to talk through the budget documents.

Health-care funding, by my understanding, has gone up and this is how—this—so—[interjection]—page 3. Read the book; it's all there in black and white.

The personal exemption has also gone up. This is the amount of money that you are allowed to make before you pay any taxes. I hear members opposite chirping away at these uncomfortable facts, but what this means is that people can make more money and keep more money before they start paying taxes to the government.

Well, it's no wonder, then, is it, that another thing that has gone up is the number of Manitobans not paying any taxes, about 8,000 people. In fact, it's a little bit more than 8,000 people are off the tax rolls altogether, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's good news.

Now, I mentioned earlier that the PST has gone down, but I need to just look at this from the opposite end and say that's—that means that the amount of money at home has gone up. And I already mentioned about \$500 for a family of four, so I won't belabour that point.

The number of police officers in this province is going up—29 new RCMP positions mentioned in this budget; 27 of those, by the way, are officers.

I want to talk about meth supports. That's another important thing, and I don't want to be

cavalier about this because I know that for those families who are affected these are enormously challenging realities.

So I would like to list off some of the meth supports which have gone up: five rapid access clinics that has—they've been opened in the last number of months; but in this budget, \$2.3 million to target drug-related crime—criminal activity; million dollars for expanding withdrawal management beds; \$325,000 for victim services.

When I speak of victim services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm speaking of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, I'm speaking of Brandon Victim Services as well as Candace House.

I've had the privilege of interacting with some of—some people attached to these organizations personally and I can say that their work is exemplary, that they are in this for the long haul and that this is a non-partisan issue. Meth is something which should and, I believe, does concern all of us, and that's why I'm happy to report that investments into the meth crisis have gone up.

Another thing that's gone up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the rainy day fund, to the tune of \$50 million, which means that we are sitting somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$265 million in that fund. That fund, by the way, was drained by the former government. There was no rainy day fund, it was just borrow; if you had a problem, you borrow for it.

Well, we don't think that that's the smartest thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We think that it's much smarter to save a little bit every year so that when you're hit by a surprise, it's not a surprise. I'm happy to report that the rainy day fund has gone up.

Some other things have gone up. As I look through these budget documents, I notice the Film and Video Production Tax Credit has continued. Did you know it's a \$173-million industry? And, in 2018, six Hallmark movies were shot in Manitoba—my daughter would be very pleased to hear that; she watches those. It's not so much my own flavour of movie, but she certainly loves them.

A Book Publishing Tax Credit has been continued for five years. The Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit also continued. So there's a—there is a recognition of the value of culture, a recognition of the value of art, as is seen by these tax credits which have continued and been extended.

We see 641 billion—we see \$641 million in infrastructure, up from 635 the year before. And this is a steady approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Also, as we close in on Manitoba's 150th year as a province, we note an investment of \$45 million.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I close today, I am saddened to say there is one thing that has gone up which I'm not happy to report. And that speaks to the fact that although much good work has been done, there's still much more to do.

Debt-servicing costs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are at an all-time high—over \$1 billion. To put that in perspective, our province runs about a 15, \$16-billion annual budget and yet, debt servicing costs are at a billion bucks. That's one thing that's gone up that needs to come down.

As we tackle the deficit, as we fix the finances, as we repair the services and rebuild the economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope and I believe you will see more things—more of the right things coming down, more of the right things going up and Manitoba surely being the most improved province in all of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I rise to talk about this Budget 2019 that this Pallister government has attempted to impose on the poor citizens of Manitoba.

The title of the document, really, is another misleading bit of 1984-type bafflegab from this government—Getting the Job Done. I guess it depends, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on what the government thinks the job is.

Clearly, what Manitobans have seen is this government thinks cutting the services they depend on is the job. So if that's truly what the government believes, then, yes, they got that done; I'm sure they're not finished with those cuts to health care that people depend on.

And, you know, the Minister of Health and several other ministers will stand up and say, oh, no, we're spending more money than ever. Well, no, they're not. Clearly, that's not true. What they're doing is budgeting a small increase. But what we've seen, particularly last year, is they underspent that particular health budget by a quarter of a billion dollars—quarter of a billion dollars that could've gone towards, I don't know, finding some obstetricians to operate out of the Flin Flon hospital, finding some

doctors to service the North, finding some roads to fix. You know, there's people that live outside the perimeter of Winnipeg. *[interjection]*

* (15:30)

And I hear the member from Swan River speaking and I'm sure he'll get his opportunity to talk about roads in his area and, well, maybe the health care that's disintegrating in his area. I'm sure he'll want to bring that up.

You know, I talked in the BITSA debate a little bit about the member from Thompson and what I was sure he'd want to stand up and have to say, and I'm sure he'll want to stand up and have to say some things in defending the cuts to the Education budget that are going to affect his constituency in Thompson.

I was just reading an article today that talked about how they're going to try and figure out what they're going to make do with less, what things that will affect children, going forward, they're going to have to cut out of their budget, thanks to this government, this provincial government, this Pallister government, getting the job done.

And they're not done, I'm sure you know that, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that the cuts are far from finished with this government, unless, of course, the rumours come true and they call a snap election and then they won't be with us anymore to cut anymore. It's somewhat sad when one of their ads that I saw on Twitter now shows them running with scissors, their own ad, because that's what we said they were going to do during the last election. That's what we've said they're going to do since they've been elected, and they always stand up and say, oh, no, no, no, no, that's just the NDP fear-mongering.

And yet we see the cuts that have happened and the cuts that will continue to happen that will affect our health care, that will affect our kids' future, that will affect the province of Manitoba's future. So were they running with scissors? Yes, they most assuredly were, and, yes, they still are because they're not done hacking and slashing yet. The cuts keep coming.

So now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're saying getting the job done. Again, it comes down to the definition of what the job is. The job of the government should be making sure the citizens of this fine province are looked after, making sure that somebody in Flin Flon who wants to have a family, wants to live in the North, start a family can actually deliver a baby somewhere close to home.

This government got that job done; you can't do that anymore. This government, in their three years that—three painful years that they've been here, have made sure that they had a Look North plan. Oh, wait a minute. They didn't make sure they had a Look North plan. They keep talking about a Look North plan. So far the only thing that we've come out of that Look North plan is—oh, nothing, absolutely nothing.

They talk about tourism, but they won't fix the road going to Lynn Lake so that tourists will be more than happy to go there. They won't do anything about the shortage of cell service. You know, they talk about—I've heard any number of the southern rural representatives talk about, well, we have to commend MTS for getting another cell tower up in my area because we have spotty service. Imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, travelling in the North. Once you leave Thompson, there isn't spotty service; there's no service.

An Honourable Member: None.

Mr. Lindsey: None. My colleague from The Pas knows this. Her and I travel extensively throughout the North, going to our constituencies, talking to people that we represent, and we know that cell service is non-existent. We know that, in a lot of those communities in the North, Internet service is either non-existent or too expensive. We know that a lot of those communities, they may have it at the school and people try and piggyback onto the school's Wi-Fi; of course, it goes so slow then that nobody can get anything.

So what has this government done to address that? Well, nothing. That's not getting the job done for people in the North, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So what have they done to help people in the North? We've seen massive job losses in Thompson as the refinery and everything shut down; the smelter's shut down. We know that HudBay Minerals has announced that there's going to be massive job losses in Flin Flon when they shut their entire mining operation in Flin Flon down.

So what has the government done to try and address that? Same Look North plan, I guess—nothing. They've done absolutely nothing to try and help those communities. In fact, the City of Thompson was trying to access the mining reserve fund and they couldn't. There's concerns about what's happening with the mining reserve fund going forward. Certainly, Flin Flon will be looking to use

some of those funds to try and help themselves going forward because a mining town without a mine, future kind of looks a little bleak.

Now, I've got to commend a lot of people in the city of Flin Flon and Thompson because they're not willing to give up on their communities. They're not willing to give up on the North like this government has. They are doing everything they can think of to try and figure out what kind of opportunities can be created in the North to make sure that there's employment opportunities, to make sure there's a future there.

I look at OCN, for example, and some of the good things that they're doing to create a future for people on OCN and The Pas region, things that the government could be involved in to help all the North, but they're not.

An Honourable Member: No more red tape.

Mr. Lindsey: I hear the member from Swan River once again beakin' off. He says: No more red tape. Well, red tape isn't going to create a job and eliminating red tape, so far, hasn't created one job, either. Neither has anything else that this government has done in the North.

You know, they talk a lot about, well, we don't believe in making investments in private enterprise. Well, that's not exactly right either, is it, because they have invested in Maple Leaf. They have invested in—Broquette [*phonetic*]? Is that the name of the place?

An Honourable Member: Roquette, yes.

Mr. Lindsey: They've invested in that. So they've invested in a lot of things related to the agriculture sector, which is good. I have nothing against the agriculture sector, but Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not the only sector in this province that needs a little bit of a helping hand.

What have they done to help the mining industry? Have they done anything to encourage exploration? No; they've done nothing. In fact, I'm told that they actually—not this year, but last year—threatened one of the explorers that, you'll get no money from us, which is kind of a sad commentary because that is the future of mining in the North.

So what have they done? Have they worked with the First Nations communities to try and get the consultation piece completed and finished so that everybody understands what those rules are going

forward? No; that's still out there. They haven't finished that, haven't done that.

They haven't invested in technology in the North. They haven't really invested in anything, and, again, I hear the member from Swan River beakin' off about leave it in the ground, and he'd probably be surprised to learn that never have I said that. He'd probably be surprised to learn that I can like mining but I also think he'd be surprised that I like mining done differently. I don't like the way it used to be done where they just rape and pillage the land and nobody gets any benefit out of it except for the mining company.

And I've said this to the mining company when I've been there, is I want mining and I want it done differently. I want it to respect the environment; I want it to respect indigenous people, and I want all of us—all of us to share in the benefits of those resources that belong to all the people of Manitoba, not just their rich friends.

* (15:40)

So, now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what could they be doing? Well, there's a lot of things that they could do. Certainly, we've put some proposals forward about, well, what could happen in Flin Flon? It could become a regional centre for health care because—I realize that many of these members opposite don't know where Flin Flon is—the member from Swan River does because I've seen him there.

So there's a border that runs through the middle of town and there's another little community on the other side of the border. So we have a golden opportunity to do something different, to make sure that we capture at least three different levels of government to help us make something possible to turn that bad news story into something good.

But it would require some innovative thinking on the part of government. It would require possibly some investment on the part of government. Oh, they don't invest in private enterprises in the North. Wait a minute, health care so far isn't a private enterprise. So perhaps—perhaps, maybe, in a budget they could talk about investing in health care in the North that would benefit people in the North.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

One of the things that I'm sure everybody's heard me talk about is the Northern Patient Transportation Program. Now, most of you, when you need to go to the hospital, call the ambulance, and it takes you to

the hospital. If you live in the North, you can call an ambulance. It will take you to a hospital or a nursing station. But what it won't do is take you to anywhere where you need to see a specialist for more advanced medical care. For that, you have to fly, take a bus or drive. The Northern Patient Transportation Program was implemented recognizing that the right to health care is a universal right that should be available to every citizen in this province.

Now, I realize that living north of the 53rd parallel is somewhat different than living inside the Perimeter. I never expect that we will have exactly equal access to health care that you enjoy here in the city of Winnipeg—well, that you used to enjoy in the city of Winnipeg, maybe not so much anymore. But we need to be able to get here, Madam Speaker. We need to be able to get to where the health care is.

People of low income can't afford to drive. People in ill health can't afford to drive for, well, six hours from—seven hours from The Pas, eight hours from Flin Flon, nine hours from Thompson, 12 hours from Lynn Lake. Well, there is no road from Tadoule, except in the winter, and then it's 12 hours to just to get to Lynn Lake.

So that was the point of Northern Patient Transportation Program, was to make sure that people in the North could get to health care in the south. This government, while claiming to have not made any cuts, have systematically decimated that program. People that used to be able to access the program to get to the medical care they need cannot do that anymore simply because this government has reinterpreted the program based on what was written in 1995. And I guess shame on us for not updating the policy to recognize the current standards. But now, for this government to say, well, we don't care what the current standards are, we're just going to go back to what it said in 1995—how many MRIs were carried out in 1995? None, because they weren't here.

So now, as people are entitled to the latest benefits available for health care, apparently, they're only entitled to that benefit if you live close to the city.

Now, of course, one of the things I've advocated for since, well, even before I got elected, was there should be an MRI machine located in the North. And, again, this government kind of misses an opportunity because they could, in fact, look at an MRI machine at Flin Flon and not having to foot the bill for either its capital cost or its operating cost

entirely by themselves, because it would be such a benefit to people in the region, on both sides of the border, that several governments could be involved, including the federal government, because it recognizes that there's a lot of First Nations folks that would access that health care now, the same as obstetrics services in Flin Flon, right?

There's people on the Saskatchewan side that use the Flin Flon General Hospital because it was the closest hospital, and the Saskatchewan government paid for them to come there. But they can't come there anymore.

So now, instead of driving two hours, they have to figure out how to get to Prince Albert, which is four hours away. They have to figure out both people going to Prince Albert and people going to The Pas now, which is the closest birthing centre, have to figure out how they're going to survive not just getting there but how they're going to survive while they live there because they're being told, well, you have to go a couple of weeks ahead of time.

So where do you stay when you get there? Because northern patient transportation isn't paying to put you up in a hotel for two weeks. They're not paying for your meals for two weeks.

So what are people supposed to do? Well, unfortunately, for a lot of people, what's going to happen is they're going to wait and show up at the emergency room in Flin Flon when it's too late to go anywhere else and they'll have a birth in Flin Flon, whether this government likes it or not, under less-than-ideal conditions. But that's the kind of short-sighted thinking that this government and this budget foist on people in the North.

And that is really a sad commentary, that they claim they're getting a job done. The only job that they've got done is cutting and hacking and slashing at services that they promised to protect and that, clearly, they haven't lived up to that promise. The only promise they want to do is to cut taxes, never mind the services that people need. Just cut that. That's the only job they've done. Thank you.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I'm happy to speak today and join in with the many voices celebrating an amazing budget. It is a privilege to be a part of a government who isn't afraid of hard work, when you know what you are doing is the right thing.

We know we are on the right path because we are achieving results that others stated could not be

achieved. How many years did we listen to the previous government when they told us that they tried everything to reduce the emergency wait times?

Well, clearly, they tried everything except what the experts had advised. They were more afraid, Madam Speaker, of losing power than they were of causing harm to Manitobans. They poured money into a broken system, hoping that at some time, somebody would find an easier solution than the hard work of doing what is right. I believe they owe all Manitobans an apology for their lack of courage.

Madam Speaker, our government is not afraid of hard work because that's the only path to success. When I use the word success, I am speaking about the benefit of all Manitobans, because there is no better feeling than to know that decisions that we make are based on expert advice. And they have an— a positive impact on those that we serve, not just benefits today, but well into the future.

One of the recurring themes that seems to be parroted by members of the opposition is that all our government focus on is money. It is usually voiced—*[interjection]*—that actually helps—it is usually voiced when a member is harping about societal issues that are complex and were completely ignored under their government's watch.

* (15:50)

I wonder if these same members regret that nobody cared about the taxpayer money while they were at the helm of a misguided ship, that if they did act responsibly with these funds, they could have served so many more people. It was this disregard and disrespect for the very people that they serve that led to the tough decisions that we need to make today. Yes, our government focuses on our spending because we have to. After years of mismanagement of the Province's finances, our government didn't have a choice about the direction to take. We would much rather been handed a mandate to continue with great systems and services that had been well maintained and fiscally well managed. That's not what we got. I'm wondering if the financial mess the NDP created was more related to incompetence or just plain ignorance.

Financial literacy is not a skill that many people have, but when placed in a position to government— govern, it's a necessity, Madam Speaker. If you do not understand the simple elements of accounting, how are you to be responsible or to make responsible decisions with other people's money?

Madam Speaker, Manitobans understand the daily pressures of running a household with a set amount of funds. If you spend more than what you earn, you grow your debt. If you do not make payments on your debt, you'll face penalties. If you grow your debt over many years, you will eventually reach a point where it is nearly impossible for you to work your way back to balance. The Province was almost at that point when our government was elected in 2016. We had international moneylenders who were hesitant to lend any more money to our Province because the previous NDP government didn't show any signs of plans to address their growing debt. With three credit downgrades as a warning sign, our Province had to pay higher rates just to borrow money.

In less than three years, Madam Speaker, our government has shown that we are willing to take the political risks necessary to benefit the people that we serve. Our focus on intentional spending in all sectors and finding efficiencies within systems has resulted in a healthier outlook for the future.

There is still much work left to do, Madam Speaker, but as we reach each mile storm towards a balanced budget and invest in the right areas, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Manitobans, too, are seeing the same light of hope for the future of their province. That hope is a powerful tool that motivates us to continue the work so that everyone can benefit.

Madam Speaker, I am surrounded by team members who have risen to the challenge of solving problems that the previous NDP government said could not be solved. Our results show that they are not—they were not being honest with Manitobans, and they still claim these false assertions.

My colleagues and I have experienced doubters in our lives before, and in many ways our stubborn natures thrive on proving the naysayers wrong. Instead of focusing on reasons why we could not achieve goals, our team chose to focus on a path that would lead us out of the debt—the decade of debt and decay of services and the decline in the economy that was seen under the previous NDP government.

And, unlike the NDP, we are not the party of excuses; we are the party of accountability, hard work and competence. The results speak for themselves, and we will continue to show Manitobans that their choice in 2016 was the right one for today and well into the future. We keep our

promises. We get the job done. We listen to experts and to the people impacted by our decisions.

Madam Speaker, during a recent conversation with a constituent, I was asked a question. The gentleman asked, how is it that the deficit is getting smaller if our debt servicing cost is growing? This question revealed to me that there are many people who believe that a deficit is another word for debt.

Although the two words are related, they are not the same thing. A debt is the amount of money owed to lenders with a servicing fee, or an interest rate as a minimum payment. A deficit, on the other hand, is a planned addition to that debt as more money is spent than what you're bringing in as revenue. And this would keep a government's services running. Each time the debt is increased with deficit spending, the minimum payment or interest charge increases based on how much debt builds up.

You can imagine, Madam Speaker, what would happen if interest rates began to climb to rates last seen in the 1980s. I can remember conversations around our dinner table when I was a child where my parents would share their worries about making mortgage payments in just the minimum, in addition to making payments on their school debts and the cost of raising a family. My parents did not come from privilege and money. My father was an orphan at the time that he was eighteen years old. He put himself through med school and he struggled to pay off that debt well into my late teens. We all can share stories of struggles with our own finances. We, as government, should not make it harder on the citizens that we serve.

Madam Speaker, it wasn't easy for my parents to stick to a budget during those tough times when they were—when there were unexpected costs that inevitably arose.

I'm thankful, however, that my parents were able to make it through the tough times because of their financial management skills and responsible decision-making. If we, as a government, do not address the financial challenges and if we do not do anything or everything within our power to rein in the spending, we are setting up Manitoban families for a heavy burden that they don't deserve.

We are already spending a billion dollars to service the existing debt and that number will rise if the interest rates do. It is important that the members of the opposition do learn these lessons, because if they ever do find themselves one day back in

government, I hope they have learned financial literacy by then, so that we don't find ourselves in the mess that they created.

Madam Speaker, this is money that we are paying on our debt. A billion dollars that could've been spent on programs, services, infrastructure for Manitobans. None of that can be directed there because we have to pay our minimum payment on our debts. The reckless spending and debt growth have consequences. And those consequences are real for all citizens, which is why it's so important for our promise to get back to the balanced budgets, for the sake of all Manitobans.

This budget continues to fix Manitoba's finances and we are getting the job done because we said we would. And Manitobans deserve a break. Integrity is not something that you tell people that you have. It is a value that is displayed by doing what you said you will do, especially when it's difficult to do it.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to share some of my thoughts on this budget. I am extremely proud of our team. I will continue to work hard for my constituents and all Manitobans so that we don't have to repeat the mistakes of the past; that we can share the knowledge and the results that we have achieved, so that future governments can continue to provide what is necessary to all Manitobans. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, when this session began and the NDP and the Conservatives immediately launched into an afternoon discussion of the SNC-Lavalin situation, I was reminded that I had heard, a few days before, from former President Barack Obama. And he had been asked, when he was in Winnipeg, how was it that you were able to attend to so many different things at once? A President has an extraordinary range of things that he has to be looking after.

* (16:00)

And President Obama—former President Obama said: You know, I like to tell people this story, a story about a fellow who came charging into his office. And he said, oh, there's a major problem here. It looks like somebody messed up. It needs to be addressed right away.

And President Obama looked at him, and he said, you know, looks like somebody wasn't doing their job. What I can tell you, said the former President Obama, is that I'm doing my job. Are you the other guy?

And what was happening here in this Chamber is that we had NDP and Conservative MLAs trying to pretend that they were members of Parliament instead of focusing on the many, many critical issues that we have here in our province.

Madam Speaker, in River Heights, I have held, over the last year, a number of forums on health and education: looking at the future of education, looking at the need to pay attention to children with learning disorders who are often struggling in our education system.

We have had forums on health care which deal with prevention. We had a forum which dealt with the general aspects of addressing poverty and homelessness as a very critical part of preventing sickness and helping people to stay well. And we had another forum which dealt with dealing with how to prevent specific conditions like HIV/AIDS, diabetes, brain and mental health issues and addictions.

These areas are of critical importance to Manitoba. We want to keep Manitobans healthy. We also want to make sure that we're being wise in the way that we spend, and when we spend on prevention and we do it wisely and carefully, we can save a lot of future medical costs.

There is little that is more expensive than looking after people with diabetes, and yet there has been very little really effective that's been done, in terms of preventing diabetes, either under the former NDP government or under the current Conservative government, and we need to do much better in these areas.

We had a report today, a report on what happened to Tina Fontaine. The report was called *A Place Where it Feels Like Home*; an emphasis on the need to make sure that children have a place that feels like home.

I'm going to talk about the first two of these recommendations. The first one deals with ensuring that children are in school. This is, in fact, a big problem in Manitoba, which both the previous NDP government and the present Conservative government have failed to address.

Let me illustrate from a recent visit to St. Theresa Point, where I was with my colleagues the MLA for Kewatinook and the MLA for St. Boniface. We visited a school in St. Theresa Point and had a chance to talk with the principal of the early years school, and she told us that, sadly, of the 1,300

attending all K-to-12 years, that only about 700 were achieving at least an 80 per cent attendance rate.

I was shocked. We had a long discussion. One aspect which is critically important is having a school and a school environment and a curriculum—programs where children are excited and inspired to attend. Sadly, this aspect is being forgotten by the current government, which is just focused on cutting budgets.

All of us, in all communities, need to work together to emphasize the importance of children being in school and then addressing issues like poverty and transportation, which can make it more difficult for some children in some families.

We also need to have a vision for education in which children are excited and inspired to attend school. At a forum which I held recently in River Heights, we had Ben Carr, who's a principal of the Met School in Seven Oaks, talking about how they have centred the learning program on the children, and it is being very effective in keeping children in school and providing them an effective education and, indeed, a transition to the world beyond grade 12.

The second recommendation deals with ensuring that there are supports in place to address brain, mental health and addictions issues. The previous NDP government, sadly, failed in this area and the present Conservative government has done very little in the last three years. The Conservative government has delayed—even putting out a request for a proposal came in late. The report, which resulted—the VIRGO report, was very slow and late to be delivered, and we now, three years after the last election, still don't have an implementation plan, as the Children's Advocate pointed out so clearly this morning.

Sadly, the present Pallister government has been a disaster when it comes to implementing action to address brain, mental health and addictions issues. Health care takes up close to half of our budget, and yet over the three years of the Pallister government we have seen continued chaos in health care. I have almost daily people coming to me with problems. There have been extensive issues around personal care homes, like the Lions Prairie Manor in Portage la Prairie.

There have been very long delays for people who may have cancer in getting access to tests to confirm the cancer and in getting treatment, as we saw with George Myer, who was told that he likely

had cancer from an X-ray in September, and in January still had not had the confirmatory tests, and as a result of not having had the confirmatory tests, did not have—has not—had not, at that point, started treatment. And when you have cancer you can't just delay for month after month. You need to be on top of the situation. You need to be moving quickly and it is important that we are doing better than we are seeing right now.

We are seeing people who are being turned back or away from full emergency rooms and sent to other hospital emergency rooms often a considerable distance away, and sometimes having to go to more than one emergency room before they finally find a third emergency room where they can actually get attention.

There is continuing delays in an effective plan to address the meth epidemic. We have Rapid Access clinics which are basically referral locations and these have resulted, in fact, because more people are being referred in longer waits for treatment instead of helping people who have meth addictions effectively and quickly in a way that it works.

There are issues of access to quality care in northern Manitoba, as I saw recently when I was in Thompson and Norway House, St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack, Garden Hill and Berens River with the MLA for St. Boniface.

There is good health care to be found and there is good health care that we must have, but this government, too often, has been focused on making short-term cuts, which often, in fact, increase long-term costs.

Instead of a combined clinical services plan and preventive services plan, we need two separate plans. They are separate projects but they will need separate people involved and when you try to do them both together the acute care clinical services tends to overwhelm the need for attention and, in fact, the prevention gets less attention.

We have the latest changes to the regional health authorities, shared services now being established so that it can provide centralized micromanagement of facilities around the province.

* (16:10)

This really doesn't make sense. The government should understand and use better the principle of subsidiarity: that things are done better at a level where they can be done most effectively and a lot of

health care can be done closest to where it's been delivered and managed closer to where it's been delivered. It doesn't make sense for Shared Health to manage hospitals, like the Health Sciences Centre.

It doesn't make sense to have centralized micromanagement hiring and firing of local staff, for example, as is happening, as I hear, in some areas. We need to do much better. As I've already mentioned, in addressing issues of brain and mental health and addictions, we've long advocated to have much-improved access to psychological services and for much better peer support.

In education, we have a government which is moving towards centralized control, and getting rid of local school boards. Often new ideas come in faster with local school boards. They can be very effective. Seven Oaks school board brought in the two Met schools. They are the first in Canada. And such innovations often happen much better with smaller school divisions.

Further, there's no cost-saving from amalgamations as we found earlier in the—about a decade or so ago, when the NDP amalgamated a lot of school divisions. Further, there's no vision for the future of education and no plan toward keeping children in school, a plan which is critically important. We need more attention to early childhood education and better support for children in their early years.

In sustainable development, we have the Wanipigow sand project put forward by Canadian premier sands. Construction is proceeding even before there's an environmental licence. When it comes to environment and the Wanipigow sand mine, the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires), sadly, denied the reality of what's happening under her watch, that this construction is proceeding, even though there is no environmental licence.

Just like with the NDP in 2013, where a whole mine was built before the environmental licence was issued, the Conservative government is not paying attention to what really should be happening, that you should have environmental licence before you have construction proceeding.

When it comes to climate change, I will quote Peter Denton, who said in the Free Press today: "Manitoba has done nothing substantive toward creating a greener world since the Progressive Conservatives formed government in 2016. If

anything, we've gone backwards, despite myriad consultation with a broad spectrum of Manitobans."

Mr. Denton goes on to say that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) leads the Manitoba list of climate-deniers. The Premier he says, continues, I quote: "By dithering for three years on the climate file, he has made our province less secure and less sustainable for all Manitobans, present and future.

"We could have had a revenue stream that offered incentives for people to make lifestyle changes of their own, providing greener alternatives than the provincial budget could otherwise afford. Two years ago, that's what business, industry and environmental organizations agreed was the best idea, as long as low-income families were protected by rebates from the increased cost to basic services from a carbon tax."

When it comes to Lake Winnipeg, although I was pleased to hear the recent announcement by the minister, what we really need is a move towards eco-certification. And we are not seeing that for Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba or Lake Winnipegosis. The government needs to get to work. It promised eco-certification. It has not delivered, and it looks like it probably won't deliver in this mandate.

We need to grow the economy, instead of shrinking it. We need to do better for Manitoba. Instead of designing a budget to shrink the economy, we need to be a better partner with Ottawa, to make sure that the dollars which are available from the federal government for infrastructure in so many other areas are actually being used and helping us with progress.

We need to invest in research, instead of dropping Research Manitoba as a line item in the current budget. When it comes to mining, the recent report, in fact, gave Manitoba a very low mark. If you look, for example, at this table 10 from the report—how often did the jurisdiction meet its own established timelines or milestones for permit approval decisions? Rarely met its own timelines: Manitoba, 44 per cent; Saskatchewan, zero per cent. We are way behind Saskatchewan when it comes to progressing quickly on mining permits.

Table 8, the amount of time respondents expected to spend getting the permits, licences or notices of work to conduct exploration activities, 24 months or more: 30 per cent of Manitoba companies. Compare that to Saskatchewan; no

Saskatchewan companies indicated that they would have to take longer than six months.

So Saskatchewan is way ahead of us in Manitoba. Saskatchewan should not be way ahead. It is because this government and the government previously were not on top of what needs to be done in helping mining programs in our province.

It is sad that the Conservative government is making changes which provide for lower taxes on those with high incomes, while increasing taxes on low and income Manitobans. My colleague, the MLA for Burrows, brought this out very clearly in some of the property tax changes in which the high-income Manitobans will have no impact to increase property taxes, while many low- and middle-income Manitobans are facing increases in their property taxes up to \$500 a year. My understanding is, interestingly enough, that 90 per cent of the people in the area around Rossburn are seeing increases in their property taxes, a sad testament to the backwards approach by this current government.

But we're also seeing, and interestingly enough, with the PST—just think about that. Those with high incomes, like the current Cabinet ministers, may not have to pay as much if they buy a Mercedes-Benz. They can probably save thousands of dollars, but look at that. Somebody who is poor who wants to buy a loaf of bread doesn't save a penny with this drop in the PST. It is a double standard in which those who are wealthy are benefited by this government and those who are poor are forgotten.

It is sad—it is also sad to see that some of the highest increases in spending in this government are for those who are staff in the Executive Council and the senior administration of ministers, and this is all happening while this government is cutting services all over the place for ordinary Manitobans.

First Nations, Inuit and Metis people, it is sad to have a government which sees them as a problem rather than seeing indigenous people as partners and working together.

In arts and culture, I was at the Centennial Concert Hall this morning. There is a desperate need for some basic improvements there to improve the sound quality for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. And people are very concerned about this, and yet there was nothing in this budget that would indicate any support for the Centennial Concert Hall. That is a sad testament to the lack of attention by this government on arts and culture.

With those few comments, Madam Speaker, I will look forward to remarks by others.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): It's truly an honour to rise today here to speak to this most recent budget. I want to first start off by saying it's been a tremendous honour to continue to serve the good people of Southdale. I believe that it's an honour for everybody to be in this Legislative Assembly.

And as part of the democratic process, I know that the boundaries are being redrawn and some—unfortunately, I'll be losing part of my riding. I know some people have—in this Chamber have experienced the same thing.

So it is a bit sad to lose neighbourhoods that you once represented and—but I do want to assure everybody in my community, in my constituency, that, of course, I'll continue to represent them and support them 'til the election and after that I do ask for their vote again.

* (16:20)

You know, Madam Speaker, I—with respect to our 2019 budget, I would like to echo the wise words of my friend and colleague from Transcona, who said: Best budget ever. You know, in this budget—of course, there's a number of really good items that came through. But, of course, we would be remiss if we didn't talk about the PST reduction.

You know, Madam Speaker, I was actually door-knocking this weekend, and that's an issue that came out the door. And, of course, people were very excited to hear that the PST's going down. The only people that don't seem to appreciate it are members opposite, you know, union bosses and special interests who benefit from higher taxes.

Unfortunately, that's not representative of the real people of our province. People want to spend less money when they're at the grocery store. They want to spend less money when they're buying items. Everyone has to buy consumer items—that's a fact. And members opposite don't understand that. I guess maybe it's because their union bosses have told them what to say. I would imagine deep at—within their own conscious, let's say, that they would actually support a tax decrease.

You know, wasn't it the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) who called the PST increase regressive? [*interjection*] Yes, attack on the poor, Madam Speaker. Well, and then they turn around,

and now they've got quite the quagmire. What do they do? Do they support our tax cut or do they oppose it? Well, the member from Fort Rouge is on record as opposing the PST increase. The—of course, the member and the Leader of the Second Opposition (Mr. Lamont), the Liberal Party, has done the same thing, who's said that they don't 'amprove' of increased sales tax.

So what will the opposition do, Madam Speaker? They don't know what to do, so they attack and they make outlandish statements about our government when the reality is that, after three years of this government, we've seen a reduction in health wait times.

You know, I would refer members opposite to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, where it clearly states that wait times are down. And, if there's an issue with the changes that have been made recently with our government with respect to health care, let's not forget that that was the Peachey report, a report that was commissioned by the NDP government. So they used taxpayers' money to pay for it, to commission the report, and they turn around and oppose it. I don't understand what the logic behind that is.

Again, maybe individually they support it. But perhaps their union bosses, again, have given other directions and they're just following their talking points like good soldiers. I can't speak for them, Madam Speaker, but I can only speculate. And, as far as I can tell, that seems to be what's happening.

You know, I would say that if—as members talk about spending—I know the members opposite are very good at spending lots of money and certainly raising taxes to fund that spending habit. Now, Madam Speaker, it would be—I would think it's logical that if spending was a solution—and unbridled spending, that is—was the solution to fixing all the problems in our province, the NDP would have fixed it long ago. They did not. After 17 years, the highest wait times in the country for health care. We were dead last on education results. Again—and falling further and further behind No. 9. If spending more was the solution, they would have fixed that, and that didn't happen.

The amount of virtue signalling and moral posturing coming from the previous government would make Justin Trudeau jealous, I think.

I would like to talk about the actual savings that our Manitoba families will experience with our PST

decrease. Madam Speaker, Manitobans will save \$1 billion over the next six years because of the PST cut. Businesses over the next six years will save \$762 million, and our government—some of the MUSH sector—as many of us are aware of what that is—\$93 million, to a total of \$1.86 billion savings over the next six years.

Madam Speaker, I think that speaks volumes to the value of a reduced sales tax. Every single person in this province has to pay a sales tax, and that's—affects everybody. So, if you have a lower tax, more money in our pockets, more money on the kitchen table and less money on the Cabinet table.

I know the member opposite had spoken just before me, and he mentioned the—Sport, Culture and Heritage. He did talk about the need for cultural—well, he was talking about his experiences or his views on what funding should look like in our province with respect to culture.

But just today, Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to join the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox) for an announcement of the revealing of the review for the sport—for Sport, Culture and Heritage. It was called the—Our Way Forward—culture, policy and action.

And Madam Speaker, it is actually a modernization of the review and modernization of the industry. Of course, the last review's been done 30 years ago, and a lot has changed since then. And it's about time that the government and, of course, the industry recognize that we are at—we're in the 21st century. And it's very good to see all the stakeholders there, that were so happy to see and very pleased by our government's step forward, and giving them the opportunity to build upon this already growing and dynamic economic sector.

It was interesting, Madam Speaker. They actually used—the backdrop of the announcement was the Nonsuch. And I remember the Nonsuch, of course, as a child, and I think a lot of people here remember it 25-some years ago when it was here in Winnipeg.

And, of course, it has since been renewed, but you know, the last time I had a chance to visit was in elementary school, and it was quite a—quite an interesting exhibit. And I think now it's more of a high-tech exhibit. We've seen right around the museum itself but, of course, the Nonsuch has added a few extra experiences, or you call it that, where you have a—sound effects in the background. And it's

a—in a 17-minute cycle, you have a full day cycle play in the background.

So you've got sunrise, sunset, you've got storm sounds, you've got all kinds of different nature sounds that would be—replicate what, of course, you'd hear if you were actually at sea.

Now, I think that it's unfortunate that after 17 years of NDP government that they never even reviewed the—much less acted on any review to change the Sport, Culture and Heritage—well, it wasn't called the Sport, Culture and Heritage Department at the time, but they did very little to try and modernize, or at least recognize the modernization of the industry. They were not interested in the modernization. They didn't—I guess they're just more interested in getting re-elected. And then at the last minute, when their premier at the time decided to raise taxes and not tell them, they became more interested in the in-fight and defending their territory within their own constituency and, of course, led a historic rebellion that just didn't end so well, and that's why—among many other reasons—they are on the other side of the House as we speak, Madam Speaker.

You know, with respect to the carbon tax, I'm very pleased to see that our government has said no to a carbon tax for Manitobans, despite what the federal government wants to do. I mean, we can't control the federal government. If they want to impose a tax, I guess that's up to them and they'll have to answer to voters this October.

But, Madam Speaker, we've ensured, here in the province of Manitoba, that no provincial sales tax will be added on top of a carbon tax. Why should Manitobans pay twice? I don't even think they should pay once on a carbon tax, but—let alone twice.

It's unfortunate that both the Liberal and NDP parties seem more interested in finding ways to get money out of the pockets of Manitobans and onto the Cabinet table to fund their own political projects, their own political careers that are more important to them than the well-being of this province.

And, you know, I hear some members opposite agreeing with me, and I do thank them for that. I know that they've maybe have learned their ways and they've learned a very important lesson from their historic defeat in 2016. And maybe this time when it comes to voting on the budget, they might actually vote with us on the budget and say, yes, you know what, it's good to put more money in the pockets of

Manitobans. A PST reduction is a good thing for Manitobans. You know, it was a mistake, as the leader of the opposition clearly said, to raise the PST in the first place. So, of course, it would stand to reason that they'll vote with us and support this tax cut for Manitobans.

Well, Madam Speaker, they—the Sustainable Development—I want to highlight a few things on the environmental side because I know members opposite have spoken about track records on the environment.

*(16:30)

Well, you know, I don't know that the NDP are in any position to speak about the environment and their track record. Just ask the Auditor General what they thought of the previous NDP government and their inaction on the environmental profile.

Madam Speaker, we are continuing to implement the \$40-million Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green fund, which we manage by a new Climate and Green Plan implementation office. We are providing income for the \$102-million Conservation Trust to invest approximately \$5 million annually for the conservation projects to enhance natural areas, infrastructure, and strengthen flood and drought protection and support climate change adaptation.

We're investing in critical prairie climate research that will guide partners supporting this valuable work, and, of course, we're working with our First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to support indigenous-led forest development, Madam Speaker.

You know, Madam Speaker, like I said, the former NDP government was lambasted by the Auditor General for their complete inaction—inaction on the environmental portfolio, so they stand in the House and they dare say that this government has not acted.

Well, that's not true. Our budget shows it right here. We've got the numbers. We are actually taking action. Unfortunately, members opposite, when they were in power for 17 years, I might add—that's almost two full decades—almost two full decades, and they failed on every portfolio, including the environment, Madam Speaker—dead last in all metrics and, unfortunately, that the NDP—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. The honourable member for Southdale has the floor.

Mr. Smith: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that.

You know, perhaps the members opposite are starting to realize that they were wayward during their 17 years of mismanaging this province, but, again, only time will tell and I do encourage and implore them to support this budget when it comes to a vote in the Chamber here. I think that it's important to co-operate in this House, and if they want to do what's best for Manitobans, then I think let's go ahead and vote for the budget.

I want to talk about education and training, Madam Speaker. You know, we have a review for the education across the province here, and in this budget we've made a number of highlights or highlighted a number of things that we're doing for education in this province. You know, there's a few things here that I'd like to highlight. Of course, we're investing more than \$22 million and leveraging more than \$20 million in matching contributions to support scholarships and bursaries to undergraduate post-secondary students.

We're providing additional funding for existing educational projects, including new schools in Brandon, Niverville, Winkler, and Winnipeg. We're investing in classrooms, facilities for special need students, and major educations at École Noël Ritchot and the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine Manitoba and Mitchell Elementary in the Hanover School Division.

We're increasing the kindergarten to grade 12 capital funding by more than \$56 million to support structural repairs, roof replacements, new mechanical systems and accessibility projects, increasing primary and secondary school funding by \$6.6 million, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, \$6.6 million—that certainly debunks the myth of cuts. The members opposite have been on a warpath to try and discredit good work that's being done by this side of the House, and I say that they should get on side with us, vote for the budget, support the budget, support the decreased wait times, support to increase money in education, and support the PST cut.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Well, Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to get up in this House and to let all of these members on the other side know about all of the devastation that they're causing here in Manitoba.

We here on this side are listening to Manitobans. We don't treat them like our children and speak to them patronizingly like this government has done. They claim to listen to Manitobans, to consult with Manitobans, to consult with First Nations, to have good relationships with our city.

Our mayor has come out in the media and said he can't even get a meeting with this government to talk about the budget. Our federal government has said that they can't even get this government to sign on to billions of dollars that could benefit us here in Manitoba. Organizations: we've had whole boards walk out on this government. And this government wants us to put our faith in them; to put our trust in them; to believe that what they're doing is in the best interest of Manitobans.

Well, I can tell you right now, Manitobans won't be fooled. They want quality health care. This government is closing hospitals. They've made so many cuts that you can't even recognize the health-care system anymore. You go into a hospital, you have to wait. They say, oh, the wait times have gone on. No, no, no, no. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority have spoken out and they say those wait times have actually increased. And then when does the government come? They come in the House, here, and they say, oh no, no, no, no. That's not true. Don't believe the experts, because they're telling lies, that that's not true. It's down. When, in fact, we know that it's up.

One only has to go walk into the Health Sciences Centre to see how many people are waiting there. One only has to go into the children's emergency hospital to see how many children are waiting there, while this government continues to make cuts.

They don't care. They can afford to go and get—pay for health care. But I can tell you, the constituents that I represent, they can't go pay \$20,000 to go into a treatment centre. They can't go and pay for an MRI. They can't go and pay to get hip surgery. They rely on our health-care system, which this government is breaking. They're not listening to Manitobans, they're under-funding—\$120 million less in the health-care system, in this budget. And they say, oh, less is more, less is more.

Well, Manitobans aren't going to fall for that. They are educated, smart people that see right through these—this Conservative government. This Conservative government is all about saving money, not providing services, quality services—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —to Manitobans. Let's see. Oh, I've got a list here, of a bunch of cuts.

An Honourable Member: And it's a long list.

Mrs. Smith: Just a little bit. You know, I could probably take my whole time talking about all these cuts. Let's see. They cut lactation consultants. I know there's women on that side. I know these men have wives. I know that they've had children and they've probably used lactation consultants. But did they stand up in this House and say, you know what? My wife relied on that lactation consultant. No, they just stood on their hands, didn't say a word, allowed the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to do it. And—boom—with a stroke of a pen, lactation consultants were cut. Those lactation consultants provide support to women who are struggling with breastfeeding. We know how important that that first, you know, six weeks of breastfeeding is to mothers. Well, women have difficulty with that and they need support. And these women provided that support. Shame on them.

Let's see. Oh, they closed the Mature Women's Centre. Oh, another cut to women, for a government that claims that they care about women; that, you know, they have the best interests of Manitoba's women. Well, that's two cuts already. Women relied on that centre as well. Oh look, they've delayed the opening of the Women's Hospital. Wow. They announced they're going to close it in December. Well, I wonder why they didn't open it. Probably infighting; fighting about who's going to build what, how much what is going to cost. We can't afford a break now because we're going into an election and let's not put the money there. Let's put it into general funds and the hospital can wait. The women can wait. They can wait another two, three years while we figure it out. But women can't wait.

* (16:40)

Twenty-five thousand dollars cut from Cancer Care's mobile breast cancer screening services. Oh, look, another cut to women, for a government that claims to care about women, shame. You know how many women in Manitoba get breast cancer? A lot of women that go and need that service, but does this government care? No, they cut \$25,000 to those women.

Let's see, the Birth Centre, oh, my goodness. Argued with the Birth Centre and cut the midwifery

program, wow. You should be proud of that, another cut to women's services. Horrible, and you claim to stand up for women, wow.

Look at this. They cut \$1.3 billion—or million dollars from daycare services in the last budget. Again, who uses those services? Mostly women, mostly mothers who need to go to work to get a job to provide for their families. But does this government care? No. Seven thousand families waiting on that registry to get their kids in a daycare, and they cut \$1.3 million. Like, is that taking care of Manitobans? Absolutely not.

Do you—you care to claim about—care to care about women. Well, let's see. They've created chaos and confusion for nurses and health-care workers. Well, the nurses were so frustrated and so overworked that they actually started writing letters to this government. Did this government respond? Did they do anything about it? No, they continue to force these nurses to work mandatory overtime when they even told them, we cannot be working more than 16 hours; we're tired; we're scared we're going to make a mistake; we're scared that we're putting patients at risk.

Look, the nurses are being responsible in asking this government to not force that on them. Did this government listen? No. Again, more nurses are women, an attack on women again, wow.

I had a call from a constituent, actually probably about four constituents, about three weeks ago, that went to Seven Oaks emergency room on the same day, within maybe an hour. The doctor came out and he said, we are 35 per cent overcapacity; we're not going to be able to see many of you here. And the waiting room was full; there was nowhere to sit. In fact, they had brought out some wheelchairs or, I don't know, some kind of chairs they'd said, for people to sit on. The doctor came out and said, we have no beds; we've brought out all the beds that we have; we're using all the rooms we have. We have no more room to take any more patients. You can wait, but we don't know how long you're going to wait, so we suggest you go to a different emergency room.

Well, guess what, Madam Speaker? Every other emergency room were experiencing the same, the same thing, the exact same thing. And this government wants to close two ER rooms? They've already closed one, which has already put a burden onto these other hospitals, but they're not listening.

Do they care that Manitobans get timely access and quality health care? No, their bottom line is about money, money over people, and they keep trying to fool Manitobans: oh, more—or less is more—less is more. We'll put less money into the health-care system, but you're going to get more services. That's going to decrease your wait time. That's going to make your cardiac surgeries quicker. You're going to get your hip surgery quicker. Well, let me tell you. Manitobans aren't fooled by what you're trying to sell.

You voted against a bill, Bill 200, a bill that would actually protect women and their reproductive health-care providers. I can tell you, and I shared this in the House last time, I had three miscarriages, and every time I had a miscarriage, I had to go to the Women's Hospital, and I had to walk through people who were picketing.

And they say, oh, they don't yell at people; they're not infringing on people's rights. You know, they—they're entitled to be right there screaming at women as they go in the hospital. Well, that's what happened to me, and I wasn't even going to have an abortion. So, you know, shame on this government for taking away that right.

All we were asking for is we were saying, yes, have the right to protest, but just do it across the street so that women can be respected for going to the hospital. We weren't saying to stop them from protesting. But did this government care? Did they want to stand up for these women? No, they voted against it, again, around women's issues, a government that claims to care about women who, in fact, are a part of Manitoba.

Let's see—oh, you voted against a bill, a bill that would require judges—judges to take training on sexual assault and consent. Wow, how—*[interjection]*

No, that's horrible. And I hear the member from Kirkfield Park piping in there. He could have stood up. He could have supported it. Did he? No, he voted against it, along with the rest—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —of his caucus. Shame.

Well, let's talk about the North End. Well, North Point Douglas Women's Centre, the North End Women's Centre—this government, these guys, all these people over here—half of them aren't here, but the ones that are here, they stood up—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I'd just remind members when speaking in the House that there is to be no mention of whether people are here or not. We obviously know that there are members doing some work and some are doing House duty, and that's very common on both sides of the House. So making any reference to the fact that there are not people here is not an—acceptable in the House.

Mrs. Smith: So, \$120,000 was cut from the North Point Douglas Women's Centre. But did they care? No, they allowed it to happen. Did they vote against it? Did they stand up to their Premier (Mr. Pallister) and say, hey, that's a bad move? That supports people in the North End that need it the most. No, they let it happen. They allowed it to happen.

These services that go to support people who are living in poverty—women who are exiting domestic violent relationships frequented this centre. Did they care? No, they claim to stand up for women's rights, they claim to support resources for women that are getting out of domestic relationships.

This is a fine example of it: \$120,000 cut. That meant a counsellor, someone that these women could go to, to find the resources to be able to get into emergency housing, to find a counsellor outside of their neighbourhood, to be able to access, to get their kids into a 'stafe' space, to access some of those centres where they could go. But did this government care? No, they allowed it to happen.

North End Women's Centre lost Neighbourhoods Alive! funding. Another cut that services women—women actually go and live in this centre. These women are exiting domestic abuse relationships. But did this government say anything? Did they do anything? No.

I keep hearing them, oh, we stand up for survivors of domestic violence. Well, here's two centres right in the heart of the North End that they could have stood up for, that they could have not cut the funding to. But did they? No, because they say one thing and they do another. Shame.

The abortion pill—you know, they claim that it's available all over Manitoba. Well, let me tell you, if you live in Norway House, if you live in Gods River, if you live in Poplar River, if you live in Opaskwayak, you don't have access to that pill. You have to come to Winnipeg to get that pill. You have to come to see a doctor here. Do you think women have the money to be able to travel to Winnipeg?

They may have money on the other side to do that, but these women don't and they shouldn't have to leave their community to get that.

And they say, oh, it's accessible to all women right across the province; you know, they can access—it's not. We hear from these women all over the province, all of these rural communities that are already at a disadvantage. They talk about Internet; well, these communities often don't even have Internet.

* (16:50)

You know, let's talk about Flin Flon now. They cut the birthing program there: another cut to women. We are standing up for women. Yes, it's our government, our caucus that's standing up for women, not yours.

You guys like to cut, cut, cut. You keep running with scissors, and you're not taking care of Manitobans' best interests. You've got your own interests at the centre of it, and you need to start listening to Manitobans. You need to start listening and standing up for women. You claim to, but you say one thing and you do another.

Women should have access to give birth in their community. They shouldn't have to leave Flin Flon. I don't have to leave Winnipeg to go somewhere else to have a baby. Why should they? They should have access just like we should.

Flin Flon—they don't even have a doctor there. You know, they talk in—on the other side, a good talk. Oh, we have more doctors than ever. We've hired some doctors. Where are these doctors? They're certainly not in our rural communities servicing our rural people that are also—let's see—Manitobans. Who would know that?

You know, sorry, but—[interjection]—I will. Let's talk poverty. Hmm. Nothing in the budget addressing poverty. You know, families—kids are still going to school hungry. What did this government allocate for school programs, school nutrition programs? Zero. Zero.

They're cutting funding to education: 0.5 per cent they were given. These are their kids that are going to these schools—oh, maybe they're going to private schools. Maybe that's why they don't care. I actually don't know, but I can tell you, on this side of the House, we stand up for education. We're listening to parents. We're listening to grandparents.

We're listening to children. We see the need to invest in our kids.

These are our future. Kids that need extra supports—taking the top off of class sizes. Madam Speaker, I was a teacher. I couldn't get to every child; 27 kids in my class I had until that cap came. I was a grade 3/4 teacher. That made a world of difference, having 20 kids in my class.

I can tell you: I was able to get to every kid. I was able to give them the one-to-one support that they needed. I was able to differentiate my teaching. This government doesn't care about any of that. They care about the bottom line; about saving money, not about Manitobans' needs.

You know, they claim to care about Manitobans, to have their best needs at the heart of this, to, you know, be listening, but we know none of that is true. If it was true, they would be listening to teachers and they wouldn't be cutting those class sizes. They would be investing in health care. They would be investing in women. They would put that money back into the North End.

That's not the only program. We have what's called the North End Community Renewal Corporation. This supports families who need support that own their house, that need some repairs but can't afford it. They can apply for a subsidy.

What did this government do? They cut that program, cut the program for seniors that access that money, cut that money for people with disabilities. Like—and they claim to care about Manitobans, to be fixing Manitoba? They are breaking it. They are breaking it, Madam Speaker.

We've listened to Manitoban after Manitoban. We've got so many emails. I probably get 200 emails a day. Ever since this budget come out, maybe even three or four hundred. People are upset. They are sorry that they made the decision to put them where they are, but I can tell you, Madam Speaker, the time has come and Manitobans aren't going to be fooled by this government.

And, you know, they can sit there and not speak up for Manitobans, but on this side of the House we will, and we'll continue to, and shame on you.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I must say it's certainly been an entertaining afternoon. I want to kind of change things up a little bit and actually talk about the budget, but—and I will. You know, I've

often stood in this House and wondered why we do what we do here when we debate bills, whatever the bill is, because you look around and whatnot; people really don't pay attention anyway.

But when people are heckling—[interjection] See, just like that. At least it's comforting to know that you're listening. So I thank you very much for that; it's a nice change, and it is great. It just shows that we're all in this House, we're very passionate. It would just be nice to have the right information on the record because we hear a lot of things.

I don't know if it's my turn to speak or their turn to speak, but, hey, if we can do this together, that's what you call working together, so that's great.

So let's talk about Budget 2019 because it is about getting the job done. And I can remember back in 2016, even before that, the fall of 2015, Madam Speaker, when I'm out knocking on doors and I'm talking to people and I'm trying to figure out what are their concerns, what should I be bringing to the Legislature, what should I be bringing up, what information from them should I be bringing forward, because we all in this House were elected to represent our constituents and bring their voices forward, and every time I get the opportunity I'm asking them for their inputs. Whether it's my idea, whether it's an opposition idea, I'm out there, I'm asking, and I'm getting information.

And just on this bill alone—I mean, we all know that last week in Brandon we were very fortunate to host the Brier. And when I was at the Brier before the budget, you know, a lot of people chatting about what's going on, what's happening and things like that.

When I went back to Brandon on Friday, back to the Brier after the budget was read and presented, I had a hard time getting to my seat to sit down because people were excited, they wanted to talk to me about the budget. Some MLAs may get 200 emails a day; I think I've heard that story somewhere. I didn't get 200 people coming up to me on Friday night at the Brier, but I did get a number of people coming up, expressing appreciation for our government in doing what we said we would do, and that's getting the job done.

So we made a promise back in 2016. We came out, and I think everybody in the House, even the opposition, can say exactly what I'm going to say here because they've heard it a number of times, because after a decade of debt, we said that we

would fix the finances. After a decade of decay, we said we'd repair the services. And after a decade of 'dekine'—decline, pardon me, we said we would rebuild the economy.

So, Madam Speaker, we've heard many times that the previous government had left our Province with record debt and decline it—declining credit ratings.

Just this week—I believe it was even yesterday—the member from the Interlake reminded us that our summary deficit was approaching \$1 billion annually and our debt servicing is actually over the \$1-billion mark for the first time.

When we look at what we can leave to generations to come and what are we doing as a government to ensure that our children and our children's children, our grandchildren, great grandchildren have a future in this province, we can look at what our government is doing and how hard we're working to reduce that deficit.

So not only do we have the debt reduced, but we also have that \$1-billion payment reduced over time so that we can, as mentioned many times here in the last few days, we can put more money back into

programming in education, in health, in families and even in more areas.

Again, it's really scary when we start looking at what our level of debt is and what our debt payments, or servicing costs, are going to be.

And, again, I want to, once again, give a big shout-out to my colleagues and to everybody in Manitoba who has been involved in the process of putting budgets together for the last three years, providing their input so that we, as a government, can listen to them, put measures in place and help reduce the deficit for all Manitobans. We do that by shopping smarter, by eliminating duplication.

One thing I used to do when I was in management before being elected, and I still use in my own constituency, here in my office and how I operate our office, is we need to identify deficiencies and build on efficiencies to not only create opportunity—

Madam Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 15 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Children's Advocate Report	
Bill 9–The Family Law Modernization Act		Fontaine	621
Cullen	615	Fielding	621
Bill 220–The Vital Statistics Amendment Act		Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	
Kinew	615	Fontaine	621
		Fielding	621
		Pallister	621
Members' Statements		Curriculum Support Centre	
Ruthanne Dyck		Kinew	622
Reyes	615	Goertzen	622
Health-Care Services		Pallister	623
T. Marcelino	616	Number of Children in Care	
Rogers Hometown Hockey		Lamont	623
Friesen	616	Pallister	623
Evelyne Anderson		Children in CFS Care	
Lamont	617	Lamont	624
Lexi Orbanski		Pallister	624
Johnson	617	Mediation Services	
Oral Questions		Lindsey	624
Death of Tina Fontaine		Pedersen	624
Kinew	618	Pallister	625
Pallister	618	Ambulance Fee Reduction	
Children's Advocate Report		Teitsma	625
Kinew	618	Friesen	626
Pallister	619	Children's Advocate Report	
Truth and Reconciliation–Calls to Action		Klassen	626
Kinew	619	Fielding	626
Pallister	619	Indigenous Children in Care	
Youth Mental Health and Addiction		Klassen	626
Lathlin	619	Fielding	626
Friesen	620	Petitions	
Children's Advocate Report re: Education Review		Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services	
Lathlin	620	Lindsey	627
Fielding	620	Daylight Saving Time	
Youth Mental Health and Addiction		Graydon	628
Lathlin	620	Dog Overpopulation in Northern Communities	
Fielding	620	Fontaine	628

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Budget Debate
(Third Day of Debate)

Squires	629
Swan	632
Micklefield	636
Lindsey	639
Guillemard	642
Gerrard	644
A. Smith	648
B. Smith	650
Isleifson	654

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>