

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	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
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PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
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SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
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SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
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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

Wednesday, April 24, 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. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'm pleased to table the 2017-18 Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation's 31st Annual Report, and I'm also pleased to table the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation 2017-18 Annual Report.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Geoff and Regan Archambault

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Century 21 Advanced Realty owners Geoff and Regan Archambault believe that you don't just buy a home, but you buy a community, and this amazing philanthropic couple continue to give of their time, money and expertise to make their community one that we are all proud to be a part of.

A 2007 car accident in—which they were fortunate to walk away from changed the direction of their lives. A desire or dream to give back was no longer put off for the future. The time to do it was now.

In Transcona, the Archambault name is well known in the community, but their first adoption of a project was for a local park in—which they donated over \$100,000 to upgrade, where they host a summer and winter Family Fun Day for the community,

drawing thousands out for the bouncers, hay rides and even The Tragically Hip farewell concert.

I know at one time they were on 15 local boards, which all benefit from the couple's experience and enthusiasm. Wherever they see a need, they step up, give back, and are role models for realtors and anyone in the community.

While chairing fundraising events over the years, from Rotary golf tourneys to gala events, they have raised over half a million for scholarships, health care and community needs.

Their vision to help and encourage others to help has now expanded to global causes with Kenya Initiative for Development and Sustainability, or KIDS, whose mission is to build children's futures globally wire—while inspiring children locally. They took their family on a trip to Kenya to see the work done by this group and pass on to their kids, Zach and Abby, their duty to help whenever they can.

In April, they were honoured by the CREA, out of 125,000 realtors, with the national REALTORS Care Award for their volunteer work and community building.

They are not only the driving force for fundraisers in the community, they are serious fun raisers, whether it is Regan jumping on stage to belt out some Guns N' Roses with the band, or Geoff rocking those Loverboy-era red leather pants, these—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

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

Mr. Yakimoski: As I was saying, these two are fun to be around.

Please join me in congratulating Regan and Geoff Archambault on being the 2019 REALTORS Care Award winners and thanking them for all they do for the community.

National Day of Mourning

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, April 28th will mark the National Day of Mourning, which commemorates workers who have been killed or injured or otherwise made sick while on the job.

Recent statistics from the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada say that 951 workplace fatalities were recorded in Canada in 2017, with 23 of those people being age 15 to 24. In addition to those fatalities, there were 251,508 accepted claims for lost time due to work-related injury or illness.

On the Day of Mourning, we grieve for those we've lost, for the loved ones they left behind. However, we also have to renew our commitment to preventing further occupational-related deaths, injuries and diseases by improving health and safety in the workplace.

Unfortunately, this government has consistently cut standards that protect workers and their rights. They have lessened the standards that we fought to have in place to protect workers in the name of saving money for employers.

I hope my colleagues across the Chamber will listen when I say we need to strengthen our resolve to establish safe and healthy conditions in the workplace.

For the last 20 years it has been my honour to speak at the steelworkers monument in Flin Flon as both a safety rep and as an MLA on the Day of Mourning. I will do the same again this year to pay tribute to those fallen workers and acknowledge the importance of their contribution to our society.

I encourage all members to attend the ceremonies in Winnipeg or in their own constituencies.

Madam Speaker, we must mourn for the dead, but we must fight for the living.

Kaitlin McCarthy and Jessi Coulter

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I'm going to assume that you've had lunch already, but just imagine for a moment, if you will, it's dinner time, you've had a very long day here in the House, you get home and you're hungry. You look inside your refrigerator, but you are still unsure of what your meal will be. After numerous ideas run through your head, you make the ultimate decision: cast iron seared Hudson River Arctic char with smoked maple birch glaze on heritage grain.

This amazing dish is only be-possible because of two students from Assiniboine Community College's culinary arts program.

Madam Speaker, Kaitlin McCarthy and Jessi Coulter are second-year culinary arts students who

won the opportunity to represent Assiniboine Community College at the Taste Canada Cooks the Books competition recently held in Toronto. Being the only team from Manitoba, they worked hard to build their confidence and create a dish that featured Manitoba ingredients which would not only meet their own expectations of flavour, but also appearance—but would set them apart from others in the national competition.

Madam Speaker, I am thrilled to let you and everyone in this House know that Kaitlin and Jessi did all of Manitoba proud when they were announced that they had won the gold medal and been crowned national champions at this competition.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to invite you and all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Kaitlin, Jessi and their coach and culinary arts instructor, Chef Bryan Hendricks, on such a great competition and wish them all well in the future in their field of culinary arts.

Congratulations.

Corrina Avila and Calia Pacle

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of two extremely talented and hard-working students from Kildonan-East Collegiate who recently competed in the Skills Manitoba baking competition.

* (13:40)

Corrina Avila and Calia Pacle put on an-put in an incredible amount of effort into their training for the competition, during which they had five and a half hours to compete—complete a variety of baking tasks. Both girls represented KEC with professionalism while showing off their impressive talents.

Corrina is 18 years old. Her interest in baking first started years ago spending time baking with her grandmother, without ever realizing that it would eventually become her passion and potential career. She has been involved in the pastry arts program at KE now for the past 4 years and plans to continue her studies at Red River, with hopes of potentially owning her own bakery one day. Her performance in the skills competition was exemplary.

Calia is 17 years old and has also been involved in KE's pastry arts program for the past 4 years. Since being introduced to the skills competition last year, she has been training and practising to do her

very best. Her hard work paid off and she was awarded the gold medal in the competition. In the future, she hopes to pursue her dream of becoming a pastry chef and owning her own bakery.

Vocational training is an important part of our education system. The hands-on experience that vocational training provides not only provides our—prepares our students for well-paying and in-demand jobs, but also teaches them life skills that have far-reaching benefits.

I was proud to be a part of a government that prioritized vocational training in our schools and invested in the capital needed to make these programs successful. KE was a major recipient of this investment and the pastry arts program, which grew from the culinary arts program at the school, is an example of this investment. I believe continued investment in these programs in the future would continue to pay dividends.

I want to thank Corrina and Calia and—thank them for coming here to the Legislature. We're lucky to witness your talents and proud of your accomplishments. Let's all join in congratulating these two talented women.

Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I rise in the House today to recognize the Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement group.

In 1985, a group of individuals were interested in bettering the local fisheries and held fishing derbies, organized and assisted in fish transfers, purchased fish to stock in lakes, installed docks and focused on educating the public on fisheries management. This group's passion has spread throughout the community with new partnerships being created every year. They've been recognized at both the provincial and federal level.

Under the FREP program, the group has submitted a number of successful applications that have met their required criteria.

Swan Valley sport fish enhancement wants anglers to enjoy their time spent in the area, whether it's rain or shine, early or late, a quick drive or a mile walk. Their enhancement efforts ensure fisheries for the future.

Swan Valley sport fish enhancement are committed to protecting—maintaining suitable spawning habitat for walleye and other species. Through ongoing management and ideas, a

committed team—Holly, Brock and Megan—come up with innovative ideas of success.

Swan Valley sport fish believes education is vital and each year they sponsor a Family Fishing Day, school fishing trips in partnership with local school division, and their annual Fish Camp, a four-day camp providing young anglers opportunity—experience a variety of fishing and outdoor adventures.

For 33 years the group has come together for their annual sport fishing dinner. The place to be this Saturday is Swan River, where you can enjoy a traditional shore lunch featuring walleye, smoked fish and pork, where over a—or—500 outdoor enthusiasts will gather.

Congratulations to Swan Valley sport fish enhancement group for their continued success in sustaining great fishing and enhancing family outdoor opportunities for all Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

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

From Poplar Grove School we have nine students under the direction of Edrick Goosen, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome them to the Manitoba Legislature—and, if I'm correct, they are just entering the gallery now, so just to tell you, you've been introduced.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cardiac Surgery Cancellations Nurse Staffing Levels

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, many patients have been complaining about the state of cardiac surgeries at St. Boniface Hospital. This is something we've raised in the House previous. We also know that it's been reported in the media, and these issues are well known. They've been caused by a shortage of nurses. We know that there's too few nurses working in the cardiac unit at St. B. There's a 20 per cent vacancy rate there. We also know that the pipeline coming to replace them is inadequate. There are too few nurses training right now to be a—critical care nurses to ameliorate, to fix the situation at St. B. As a result, in March the wait-list for cardiac surgery doubled and went from 40 to over 100.

Now we see, through new documents that we've obtained, that the number of cancelled surgeries has also skyrocketed as well.

Will the Premier stop cutting and instead invest in hiring more nurses for our health-care system?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We're investing more than \$400 million more in health care in this year's budget than the NDP ever did. The member's premises are false, again.

But I would like to congratulate Denny King and the PEI PC Party on their decisive victory in yesterday's general election. This continues the blue wave which we began here in Manitoba in—just three years ago, and I look forward to working with the premier-designate on various initiatives that will allow us to advance the mutual interests of our provinces, such as standing up to Ottawa's continued pressure to reduce support for health care in our country.

I would also like to thank Wade MacLauchlan and his team for their contributions: Wade, to his contributions at the First Ministers' table; and his team, to their service on behalf of the people of PEI. We thank him and we wish Premier-Designate Denny King all the very best.

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

Mr. Kinew: Right, getting right back here to Manitoba and the No. 1 priority of Manitobans: health care, Madam Speaker. I'll table the document for the Premier's benefit that we have obtained through freedom of information.

Again, what this document shows is that two years ago, in the entire year of 2017-18 there were 88 cancelled cardiac surgeries, but last year that number increased dramatically to 185 cancelled heart surgeries. That's more than double, and I should add that that was only through the first 11 months of the year. So the year wasn't even done and the number had increased from 88 to 185 cancelled heart surgeries. We know the reason why this is happening: because the Premier is causing cuts; he's forcing nurses to work mandatory overtime to such an extent that they're actually hiring private nurses to work in public hospitals today.

The facts are clear: health care is getting worse in Manitoba under this Premier.

Why has the Premier made heart surgery and cardiac care worse for Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: The member speaks about health care being the No. 1 priority of the NDP. If that was the case, why were we 10th, dead last in the country when the NDP had 17 years to get it right? Madam Speaker, they didn't get it right; they got it wrong.

The member's own information, which he hands me just now, shows that in the month we came to government, the number of cancellations was 29, and that two months ago the number of cancellations was 21.

Madam Speaker, I'd say we're working very hard to reform health care, but I don't think his evidence is that compelling.

I would say, Madam Speaker, that the fact of the matter is we are standing up and we are working hard to fix a system that was broken by the NDP in this province.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, again, two years ago: 88 cancelled cardiac surgeries. Last year, because of this Premier, 185 heart surgeries were cancelled, and that's just at St. Boniface Hospital alone.

So what we see under this Premier is that he's in such a rush to change things that he's forgotten that he can actually make health care worse, and that's what we're seeing now in Manitoba. There's a shortage of nurses in this unit. The vacancy rate is too high. There's not enough new nurses being trained to fill the gap. They're struggling mightily to try and hire private nurses to work in these public hospitals, but these temporary stopgap measures just aren't enough.

Would it—what is needed is a complete rethink, a complete new approach, a new direction, and while we will bring that forward for Manitoba's—Manitobans in short order, in the meantime, I would ask the Premier to please stop cutting health care in Manitoba.

* (13:50)

Mr. Pallister: The new direction the member falsely proposes to Manitobans is backward, Madam Speaker, and that's the way we were going when the NDP were in power before, and that's all he offers now. Yet again, more backward thinking, more fearful thinking, more lacking of courage is evident.

We have more nurses working in our system than ever before, more doctors than ever before.

Wait times are down in our province more than in nine other provinces—wait times for emergency rooms, more CT scans, more MRIs, more hips, more knees, more cataracts; and, Madam Speaker, they broke the system and we're dedicated on this side of the House to fixing it.

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

Health-Care Reform RHA Budgets

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier knows full well that what he's saying is not true. Wait times are going up in Manitoba both in emergency rooms and for surgeries. These are the statistics provided by his Winnipeg Regional Health Authority—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

We know that this Premier cut funding for health care. He ordered the WRHA to cut funding by \$80 million. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: This Premier, he ordered the southern regional health authority to cut \$11 million.

What is the result this year? Well, come to find out that Southern Health is now posting a \$7-million surplus, Madam Speaker. That's money that's been taken away from services that could've been helping families, that could've been helping seniors.

Why is this Premier starving the very health-care services his government is supposed to provide?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Only starving that's in evidence today, Madam Speaker, is the lack of ideas by the member opposite. To bring forward the same false prepositions and same false assumptions day after day doesn't make them any more true.

Now, if he's interested in truth, how about this? The NDP promised Manitobans that the bipole line wouldn't cost them a penny. Was that true? Well, it sure as heck wasn't.

How about they said they cared about the environment, then they had a plan that involved the back of a napkin taking every diesel and gas vehicle

off the highways in Manitoba. Is that a plan for the environment? No, it sure wasn't.

And then they said they promised now that they wouldn't raise taxes like the PST. Was that true? It wasn't true.

So the member's not an expert on the truth telling that he should be engaging in, Madam Speaker; he's an expert in the opposite of that.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, I'm very sorry, Madam Speaker, that the Premier can't handle the truth, but the truth is the Southern Health region, the region responsible for the area that he grew up in, is cutting services for people. They've cut flu clinics. They've cut mental health services. They're scaling back the hours for the emergency room in Ste. Anne. I'll table the documents that show that they've cut positions like the chief nursing officer for Southern Health.

But the result of all these cancelled services is not just that people are going without health care, it's also that Southern Health is now sitting on a \$7-million surplus. That's money that could've been helping patients at the bedside, Madam Speaker.

So my question for the Premier is simple: Will the Premier tell the House today whether any of the other health authorities in Manitoba are going to be posting surpluses this year after he's been ordering them to make cutbacks?

Mr. Pallister: The member speaks about caring. I don't think that that caring was ever in evidence when the NDP had the chance to govern this province for 17 years, Madam Speaker. They didn't care about working families when they jacked up taxes more than every other province. That was not in evidence at all. They didn't care about the environment when they did nothing, when they introduced no plan. We've introduced the most comprehensive green plan in the country, acknowledged by the federal Environment Minister.

They didn't care; it wasn't on display that they cared about health care either, Madam Speaker, as we descended from middle of the pack in many measurements. And according to the Canadian institute of health information, who the member disputes is factual and accurate in its own research, we are the leading province at reducing wait times in Canada.

They didn't care about fixing health care. They cared about running away from the challenges that we run toward, and we will continue to run toward those challenges, Madam Speaker.

What they truly care about and it was on evidence—in evidence here clearly last week, wasn't any of those things. They care about the subsidy for their political party. That's all they care about.

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

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier's taking the subsidy, so I don't know what he's complaining about.

When it gets back to health care—again, the No. 1 priority for people in this province—the Premier's record is clear and it is shameful. We know that emergency room wait times are increasing month over month and year over year. We know that surgery wait times are increasing when it comes to hip surgeries, knee surgeries, and when it comes to heart surgeries we just proved that there are more heart surgery cancellations happening in Manitoba, and, again, it's because of the cuts that this Premier is making.

Now, is that all that this Premier has planned? No. He's rushing headlong into the closure of more emergency rooms and ambulance stations, both here in the city and right across the province of Manitoba. You know it's all about the money. It's not about the care. The documents we tabled just proved that.

Will the Premier please reverse this misguided plan that's causing so much damage in health care and return with a new one that includes keeping Seven Oaks and Concordia emergency rooms open?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): It was all about the money, the NDP, when they jacked up the PST, Madam Speaker. It was all about the money in Manitobans' pockets. They wanted it. They wanted to get credit for spending it and they didn't get any better results from it.

So we're lowering taxes and we're lowering wait times, and we're lowering deficits which they raised. They raised all of them. They raised all of them to the dissatisfaction of Manitoba patients, to the dissatisfaction of Manitoba parents—*[interjection]*—to the dissatisfaction—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —of Manitoba small-business people. They could care less about the people of Manitoba, and they just want their phony-baloney subsidy.

Lifelight Air Ambulance Request Not to Privatize

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, gaps in staffing Lifelight is putting patients in rural and remote communities at risk. Sadly, this is not the first time we have heard about staffing issues since this government announced their plans to privatize Lifelight.

This appears to be an ongoing thing. In the last two months, there have been increasing gaps in availability for Lifelight planes in Swan River as a result of staffing shortages. A physician in Swan River, Rafiq Andani, explained that, I quote: Delays in transport can have a profound impact on patients' outcomes and the overall quality of care they're receiving. End quote.

This is a vital service that should be available for patients when they need it.

Will the minister commit to resolving this issue and abandon their plan to privatize Lifelight?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for the question and I commit to answering it.

I do want to take this opportunity, though, to inform all members that yesterday, after a very successful announcement by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), myself, the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) and the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), I am able to report to all members that the number of registrants on the signupforlife.ca site is up, the second highest level ever, since yesterday: 1,207 new members.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The minister continues to receive letters from concerned Lifelight and rural physicians speaking about the risk of privatization on patient care. The most recent letter from a group of Swan River physicians states, and I quote: While the government and Lifelight sort out their funding and resource issues, rural communities like ours are suffering the consequences of not having a vital provincial program fully operational. End quote.

While the minister says that nursing vacancies are, I quote, proving more difficult to fill than originally anticipated, end quote, it could be due to the looming threat of privatization.

Will the minister commit to putting patients first, ensuring this vital service is fully operational and back off their plan to privatize Lifeflight?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the member is partially correct. It is exactly our desire to put patients first. That is driving us, as it has driven eight other provinces in Canada, to ask important questions about the manner in which this important service is delivered.

That member knows that we will continue to focus on putting the patient at the centre. That member knows that we flew a Lifeflight flight right into Swan River as recently as Monday. The service continues to operate.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The government's contingency plan of relying on STARS air ambulance still requires that critically ill patients be transported by ambulance to a community more accessible to helicopters, delaying critically needed patient care.

* (14:00)

If Lifeflight were adequately staffed and available, these patients would be able to access the critical care they need faster. This ill consideration and operation of Lifeflight by the minister is not acceptable. Timely transport and timely care is of the essence.

Will the minister commit to keeping Lifeflight a public service today?

Ekosi.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, even the former NDP government of Alberta found that it was actually better for the public to deliver that service in a private way. This isn't about an ideological debate that the member wants to try to form; it's about putting the patient at the centre.

Now here's what the member should understand: that every day, Lifeflight is flying. In the case of Swan River, we were there as recently as Monday. In the case when the determination is made by medical experts that the patient can go by land, then that is undertaken. That is a medical determination, not a political one. And, in some cases with this

contingency planning, we're able to intercept a ground ambulance and further transport that patient to the care that they need.

This isn't about ideology; it's about putting the patient first.

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Timeline for ER Closure

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Sorry, Madam Speaker, I was still thinking about yesterday when I asked this minister eight times about when he's going to tell the public about when he plans to close—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —emergency rooms at Concordia and Seven Oaks.

The minister refused to answer the question for over two hours, Madam Speaker. It's an affront to this legislation that this minister refuses to answer even the most basic questions.

Why won't the minister tell Manitobans when his government plans to close Concordia ER and Seven Oaks ER?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, in the Committee of Supply yesterday for the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living, that member tried again and again to misconstrue the facts, tried again and again to promote fear, asserted again and again that somehow hospitals were closing, when that member knows, as all Manitobans do, that those hospitals will be more important than ever as we continue to transform our health-care centre—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —system to make it better, stronger and more aligned to get better results for all Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Smith: Well, Concordia could be closing in as little as five weeks, and this government will not tell the public about its closure or even the workers who are working there, Madam Speaker.

Patients and Manitobans deserve to know that—when this ER is closing, and if they will have to travel miles to go to a different ER, which could save lives. But this government is trying to put the fool over Manitobans.

Again, I'll give this minister a chance to get up and tell Manitobans: When is he planning to close Concordia and Seven Oaks ER rooms?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, there she goes again trying to construe somehow that the hospital is closing when all Manitobans know these hospitals are going to be more important than ever as they find their rightful place, as I explained to that member yesterday, in a sub-acute, focused way to maximally respond to the needs of patients.

However, this is something else I told the member yesterday, for which she had no response: Vancouver, 1.45 million people, four emergency rooms, but shorter wait times than Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

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

Mrs. Smith: This minister claims to respect health-care workers. He isn't respecting them by holding out when he is going to close Concordia emergency room or Seven Oaks ER. He keeps saying, oh, there's process; there's things that have to be in place. It could be as soon as five weeks.

When is he going to tell the public and the front-line workers when he is going to close Concordia ER and Seven Oaks ER?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I notice how it is that the member never asks a question about results for Manitobans. And she never asks a question about how it is that these changes are—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —founded on evidence that was received by her own party.

But for the member, I would say this. Here's another example for her: in the city of Calgary that has half the wait times of Manitoba there is one emergency room for every 150,000 people. In Winnipeg there is one emergency room for every 350,000 people—the other way around—sorry—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —and yet we know that at the end of the day what matters most is getting good results for all Manitobans. Better health care sooner is what we're after.

Methamphetamine Addiction Harm Reduction Strategies

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, Manitobans are finding tens of thousands of used hypodermic needles in neighbourhoods across the province in parks, school grounds, parking lots, back lanes, even on buses.

Our caucus recently met with a delegation of medical students who wanted to talk about harm reduction, and they told us that, quote: In 2018 the WRHA distributed two million needles at the cost of \$430,000. This figure has increased 30 to 40 per cent annually since 2013, in terms of demand, but while demand for needles has increased dramatically, harm reduction supply funding has not changed since 2014-15, remaining at \$126,000. To make up this budget shortfall funds were diverted from other public health programs such as upstream population health interventions.

The Premier has often said it's better to offer a cup of coffee rather than a cold needle, but why is his government handing out four million cold needles at the expense of programs that would actually prevent addiction?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, it almost sounds like the member is advocating for the reduction in harm mitigation strategies. I can assure all members of this House that the government continues to support harm mitigation strategies right across the province in places like downtown Winnipeg and suburban, in Brandon, in areas of the North and across, wherever we have public health and primary-care facilities.

I can tell that member that there were more of those resources distributed last year than the year previous and the year previous to that, and that process will go on and—important to make sure that people get the supplies that they require.

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

Mr. Lamont: Manitoba Liberals have been calling for more than a year for funding for prevention, and we have called for harm reduction. The VIRGO report released over a year ago calls for it through-out.

The medical students who we met with pointed to a Canadian Institute of Health Research study that

showed a, quote, lack of clear policy regarding harm reduction that has led to a stagnation in community harm reduction supports and puts Manitoba at least eight years behind most other provinces. End quote.

The evidence is that harm reduction is, quote, inexpensive, practical, safe and has a positive impact on individual and community health.

I table a government chart showing that STIs and blood-borne diseases are soaring in Manitoba.

Does the Premier see that by opposing harm reduction his government is increasing harm and is playing a role in soaring infection rates?

Mr. Friesen: Members of our caucus were also pleased to meet with that group of medical students from the University of Manitoba to hear their presentation and hear about their concern, some of it from lived experience, when it comes to addressing the important issues of addictions and mental health in our communities.

I assure that member that harm reduction strategies continue to figure prominently in this government's approach in responding to what is, obviously, an increase, alarmingly, of illicit drugs in our communities, which has a devastating effect on families, on individuals' lives.

We're taking action and we will continue to take action.

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

Mr. Lamont: We've often said that this government's response to the meth crisis has been like putting a Band-Aid on a broken leg.

The VIRGO report said, quote, current services and supports offered by the Province are unable to meet growing demand, end quote, and that while, quote, Manitoba has the second highest prevalence of substance-use disorders, it allocates much less to mental health and addictions: 5.1 per cent of the provincial health-care budget instead of the Canadian average of 7.2 per cent.

Now, the Premier's been very creative in coming up with reasons for calling a snap election: (1) he's complained that the 90-day advertising limit would affect Manitoba 150 celebrations.

* (14:10)

This government is part of the meth task force involving three levels of government whose work

would effectively be suppressed by a publication ban prior to an election.

I realize the Premier simply ignore the 90-day ban the way he's ignoring a fixed-date election, but what will happen to the work of the meth task force if the Premier calls an early election? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I don't ignore the issues that are important to Manitobans, but I will ignore that question because of—the tone of it was disrespectful, inappropriate and also contained a number of erroneous assertions. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I'm hearing heckling from both sides of the House. I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please, so that we can respectfully hear questions and answers.

Tobacco Prices Decrease Concerns

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): The Quebec Court of Appeal has upheld the decision requiring Canada's largest tobacco companies to pay billions of dollars in compensation in that province due to wrongful behaviour that misled Canadians about the risks of smoking.

Now, Manitoba's case against big tobacco sat dormant for the last three years. In the last few days, this case has been stayed as tobacco companies have been given creditor protection. Now there's a risk that tobacco use in Manitoba is going to begin to rise again this summer as this government's budget makes cigarettes cheaper.

Will the government take steps to ensure that cigarettes are not cheaper this summer?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our focus as a government has—to put a little bit more money in peoples' pockets. We know what happens with the NDP, their broken promises on everything related to taxation. We know what their opinions are. In fact, we know that the Liberals' opinions are too: it's tax people to the max; that's a part of this.

Our government wants to make life more affordable. We also want to make sure health benefits are in place and health funding is in place, whether it be smoking or other things, that are in place to ensure that Manitobans are supported.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, Madam Speaker, we don't want cigarettes in pockets or on the kitchen table where young people are living.

A coalition of antismoking organizations have written to every member of the Legislative Assembly. Those groups include the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Manitoba Tobacco Reduction Alliance and the Lung Association. They're simply asking the government to make sure that cigarettes don't get cheaper this summer. They point out when the federal government made tax changes, there were offsetting taxes to make sure the cost of cigarettes did not decrease.

Will the Minister of Finance heed this advice for the protection of Manitobans and ensure that tobacco prices don't go down this summer?

Mr. Fielding: Manitoba does have some of the highest tobacco taxes in the nation. When we do hear of groups, health-related groups, make presentations to us, we as a government want to listen. We know that's a novel idea to the members of the NDP because they don't listen to anyone. We know that's the reason why they were kicked out of office after 17 years: because they weren't listening to Manitobans and they weren't listening to stakeholders.

So any time groups do come and talk to us about important health issues, whether it be that a taxation or something that impacts Manitobans and our government, we'll listen.

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

Mr. Swan: The time to listen is now. These organizations who wrote to all of us in this Chamber are concerned that cheaper cigarettes will lead to increased levels of smoking by young Manitobans. They recommend a corresponding increase in tax on tobacco to ensure that cigarettes are not cheaper this summer. They're even suggesting that the revenue could go into general revenue, although the government could choose to invest in health care and smoking cessation.

It's a reasonable and it's a responsible approach to ensure that the government's not encouraging smoking. Our NDP caucus would agree to let the government accomplish this quickly and easily if this is what they want to do.

Will the Minister of Finance heed the advice of these leading organizations—we considered them partners when we were in government—and take action to make sure that cigarettes are not cheaper to stop more young people from smoking?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Hardly, Madam Speaker. The NDP government was never a partner with these organizations; they were a partner in encouraging black-market sales of cigarettes. They raised the taxes on cigarettes to the highest level in the country and acted like they should be parading around and getting credit for doing that. But at the same time, they encouraged the private sector in the black market, illegal market, to develop marketing systems and make cigarettes available more readily and at lower cost to Manitobans. And so, as a result, the NDP actually pushed the rates of smoking upward to some of the highest in the country.

They failed to shut down the black market. They failed to take significant action, while that member served as a Justice minister, on this very problem, and now they also support the idea of 18-year-olds smoking pot.

Madam Speaker, I mean, they're on the wrong side of this issue, and they need to own up to it.

Manitoba's Economy Performance Improvements

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Thanks to our PC government, we are on our way to becoming the most improved province in Canada.

Under the NDP, Manitoba's economy was underperforming, and private sector confidence in the former government was virtually non-existent. Put those two words, economy and NDP, together: it just doesn't add up. It's an oxymoron.

Three years ago, our PC government was elected with a mandate to rebuild Manitoba's economy, and that's exactly what we've done. Today, the Minister of Finance announced some very positive economic news for our province.

Could he please share this news with the House?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Thank you for the question, and three years ago our government—or, the people of Manitoba took a new direction. They wanted us and they elected us to fix the financial mess that was left by the NDP.

Well, some of the new economic numbers are out, Madam Speaker, and what do they say?

Well, they say that Manitoba's the most improved province in the nation. Manitoba is leading the nation in private sector capital investment, up by more than 10 per cent.

Manitoba is also leading the nation in terms of international trade with the United States—up more than 20 per cent—and we're second in the nation in terms of our unemployment rate. We know that Manitobans made a right decision in terms of hiring our government to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

K-to-12 Education Review School Division Presentation

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): When I recently met with the Premier, he expressed—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: When I recently met with the Premier, he expressed his concern that Manitobans were reluctant to participate in the K-to-12 education review. I also recently met with an expert in education, who expressed their concern that the review may be a scam and a sham—their words—based on the review's questions alone.

It's also the case for the entire time that they've been in government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —the PCs appear to have been laying the groundwork for eliminating school boards by removing references in law to school divisions and duties to consult for municipalities and the Minister of Education themselves from legislation two years ago.

If we take the Premier at his word that people want to participate, his government isn't making it easy.

Why is the government limiting Manitoba's school divisions' presentation to the commission to only 10 minutes?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'm of course disappointed in the member's comments, Madam Speaker, because I believe that this review is not only a historic one, but has the potential to have historic results, historic consequences, in terms of bettering our education system for our children and grandchildren.

And, Madam Speaker, I think that's a worthwhile undertaking and one that, sincerely, I would like to see Manitobans engage in. If they adopt the tinfoil-hat, black-helicopter attitude of the member opposite, they won't participate. I'd encourage Manitobans to participate.

I know that the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) and I agree on this, that we want to see Manitobans encouraged and part of this process. I just wish that the member of the third party would also adopt that attitude.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Second Opposition, on a supplementary question. *[interjection]* Order.

Goal of Review

Mr. Lamont: I'm not Premier yet.

The other concern we've heard about this commission is that it's not about consultation or soliciting new ideas, but rather it's being set up to justify decisions—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —but is being set up to justify decisions that have already been made.

The government did not wait for the results of this commission before they froze funding for instruction, curriculum and assessment. They did not wait for a report to close the curriculum library. They did not wait for the report to introduce legislation about bargaining for teachers. They did not wait for a report to start picking fights with school trustees or criticizing superintendents on Twitter.

If the government really wanted to improve our quality of education, they'd be looking at improving instruction, curriculum and assessment, and to gather best practices internationally.

Will the Premier just admit the main goal of this review is to find out more ways to pull money out of education?

Mr. Pallister: The member opposite did not wait to be elected to begin to advocate for higher spending by governments. He did not wait to be elected to advocate for the reinstatement of the vote tax subsidy. He did not, frankly, wait to advocate for seniors or children in our province when he began to lobby for a larger office.

* (14:20)

Madam Speaker, his priorities are all mixed up. What he needs to do is encourage Manitobans to be part of a genuine effort to improve our education system for our children. This is what I would encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to do.

We here need to include Manitobans in this important exercise. It is, after all, education and the opportunities it provided that allowed that member to develop such a wonderful question as he just did.

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

School Division Funding

Mr. Lamont: Manitobans have been receiving very partisan advertisements from this government.

One, which I have tabled today, is from the member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry). I believe he's still a member of the government caucus. It makes claims that run completely contrary to this government's own figures.

The Flin Flon School Division, for example, will be receiving a cut of a quarter of a million dollars, Madam Speaker. Instead of getting the \$9.4 million that was initially announced, they will only be getting around 9.1, and exactly the same thing is happening to rural and northern school divisions across the province. They're being forced to make cuts.

Now, I know the Premier often says he was a teacher, though I'm not sure for how long, and he also promised that he would stop partisan advertising at public expense.

Why is he papering the province with this information when his own budget says the opposite?

Mr. Pallister: Yes, I was a teacher. I enjoyed being a teacher. I hope the students enjoyed and got something out of it. I know this is the member's first job, but the member shouldn't attack people for having other careers prior to getting into politics. Surely, that's not the only career a person would want in their lives.

Madam Speaker, I'm here, as are my colleagues, to advocate for a better education system and to advocate for better participation by Manitobans in a very, very historic and important process. And I would encourage the member to adopt a more positive attitude.

Basically, if he continues with this attitude, he's going to be discouraging and repelling people from participating in what could be an excellent opportunity for them to improve the education system so that better questions are asked than the set I just entertained and answered to.

Workplace Health and Safety Request for Government Support

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Every year we commemorate those who've been killed or injured or suffer workplace health issues.

It's important that the leaders of our province continue to remember those lost and injured. And yet, since coming into government, this government has consistently shown—places little value on workers' health and safety. Fact, the minister has pretty much gutted the workplace health and safety section of his entire department.

So when will the minister prioritize the needs of Manitoba workers and name a minister of labour and maybe protect workers?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Acting Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): The member asks when: every day, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, this government and this minister have consistently cut standards, weakened rules and laws that keep Manitoba workplaces safe. They eliminated the advisory council on workplace health and safety. They've done away with automatic acceptance of recognized chemical exposure standards. They've reduced the frequency of hearing tests at the same time that hearing loss remains one of the most common work-related injuries.

This government doesn't put workers first. They certainly don't do it every day. What they do is, every day they find a new way to disrespect workers in this province and put their safety at risk.

So will this minister commit to reversing the cuts and keep workers safe?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, only days ago in this Legislature, all members heard the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade talk about a method, going forward, of a more collaborative interaction between governments and industry and business partners to be able to ensure—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –a high threshold of safety for all workers.

Now, that member doesn't like that. Ideologically, he has other ideas. But other provinces are proceeding in the same way in which we are doing, proceeding on the basis of partnerships with business, with labour and the interests of workers in mind.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, this government hasn't got a clue about how to be a partner with workers in this province.

Everything they've done since coming to power has been the complete opposite—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: –of being a partner with working people in this province.

Madam Speaker, they've reduced the number of workplace health and safety inspections. They've cut the number of full-time inspectors whose job it is to go and inspect workplaces and to make sure workers can come home safe at the end of the day.

So the question is, Madam Speaker: How much worse is it going to get?

Worker safety should be a top priority, particularly recognizing that April 28th, the day to remember injured workers, is upon us, and this government is refusing to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): It truly has expired if the member is willing to stand up and not take responsibility for his own political party's lack of action on protecting its own political staffers. They failed for a decade to do that. They told their own political staff, when they were being harassed and sexually attacked, that they were to suck it up.

Madam Speaker, that's not a record of a political organization that stands up for workers, that stands up and protects people, and the member should be ashamed of himself. The fact of the matter is even when the Winnipeg Labour Council president, even when a woman comes to them and directly asks for help when she's being harassed repeatedly, she's rejected. She's rejected by that political party and they stand in their place, say they care about

workers. They don't care about workers, they don't even care about their own supporters, let alone the general population. We do.

We'll continue to stand for worker safety in this province. We won't make a show of it and do nothing about it; we'll do something about it and not make a show of it.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

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

On March 15th, 2019, the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) raised a matter of privilege contending that the government caucus had distributed false information about him in print form across northern Manitoba.

At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable member for Flin Flon moved, and I quote, that this issue be immediately referred to a committee of this House. End quote.

In raising privilege, members must satisfy two conditions in order for the matter to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. It needs to be demonstrated that the issue was raised at the earliest opportunity and also that sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House or the member have been breached in order for the matter to be put to the House.

In terms of the first issue, the honourable member for Flin Flon asserted that it was his first opportunity to raise the issue. However, he did not indicate when the actions in question he complained of occurred, so I am not able to make a determination on the issue of timeliness.

Regarding the second issue, the honourable member for Flin Flon said that the government caucus had distributed false information about him in print in the North, but the member did not provide any copies of such material, nor did he indicate what the false information was. There was no supporting proof provided for the member's matter of privilege.

With the greatest of respect, I must therefore rule that a prima facie case of privilege has not been demonstrated.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Gently and respectfully, I do challenge the Chair.

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

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

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

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

* (15:30)

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

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

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lamont, Lamoureux, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Fontaine, Kinew, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 32, Nays 11.

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

PETITIONS

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 saving time has serious consequences for physical and mental health and has been linked to increased traffic accidents and workplace injuries.

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

(3) Daylight saving time is associated with a decrease in productivity the day 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 saving 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 4, 2019, resulting in Manitoba remaining on Central Standard Time throughout the year and in perpetuity.

And this petition is signed by Quinn Schubert, Stefan Schubert, Christian Schubert and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

Northern Health Care

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 \$6 million, which has negatively affected doctor retention programs and the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

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

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

(6) The result of this decision is that mothers in Flin Flon and the surrounding area will have to travel at least an hour and a half to The Pas, creating unnecessary risks 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 this provincial government that mothers and their escorts who have to travel to The Pas will be covered by the northern—excuse me—by the northern patient transport 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.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Tina Collins, Don Mielen [*phonetic*], Tricia Hornyak and many more Manitobans.

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

* (15:40)

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And this petition is signed, Madam Speaker, by Elizabeth Wheeler, Katherine Harder, Krista Klassen and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and 'adequately' remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition has been signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And, Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by Gaza Lacema [*phonetic*], Sherri Dyck, Edmund Dagundo [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase;

quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of the—of this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which

will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed Owen Scott, Colleen Giesbrecht, Brittney Boschman and many other Manitobans.

* (15:50)

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background of the—of this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition was signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

* (16:00)

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And this is signed by Ryan Havison [*phonetic*], Valerie Ricard, and Jenniline Halina and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a

fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And, Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by Cathy McVicar, Candi Houston, Melissa Steeves and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And this petition is signed by Christine Pascua, Trista Pengelly and Tawny Boutilier and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Madam Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Pursuant to rule 33(9), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next sitting Thursday of private members' business, after the upcoming break, will be one previously announced by the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin). The title of the resolution is Mental Health Supports Needed for Youth in Manitoba's North.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next sitting Thursday of private members' business, after the upcoming break week, will be one previously announced by the honourable member for The Pas. The title of the resolution is Mental Health Supports Needed for Youth in Manitoba's North.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please call for second reading Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 24 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 24—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019

Madam Speaker: So I will therefore call second reading Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education and Training): I move, that bill number—seconded by the minister of municipal affairs, that Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (16:10)

Mr. Goertzen: I will—I'll keep my comments very short as this is routine legislation that is introduced annually. [*interjection*] We're losing members here.

This is annual routine legislation that is introduced annually that helps to clear up errors, omissions or outdated references or unclear parts of various acts that have been found over the course of a year.

It's a housekeeping bill; it often corrects typographical, numbering or other drafting errors. The Legislative Counsel generally collects a number of things over the year and compiles them into one bill so that they can be corrected all at once, as opposed to a series of bills amending the various acts.

So, while I'm sponsoring this bill, there are, of course, a number of different acts that are not within my particular portfolio that are being amended, but they are minor corrections that are made, as is done every year.

Questions

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): While I expected the comments of the minister to be brief, I maybe

didn't expect them to be that—quite that brief. So, hopefully, we'll get a little bit more context from the questions because, as he said, there are some certainly what I would consider and what most would consider housekeeping items within this bill; however, there are some changes which maybe require a bit more information.

I guess, first and foremost, I'd like him—to ask him about part 2, Private Schools, and the name change from private school to independent school and the impact that that will have.

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

This was a request from the independent schools association. We refer, in the department and I think generally in this House, to independent schools as independent schools. We refer to them in the department as independent schools. They refer to themselves as independent schools.

My understanding is that the only place they are really referred to as private schools is in the act, and so we're just aligning the vernacular to match how they're referred to in every other way and in every other place.

Mr. Wiebe: So, again, I'm just trying to get some context here in what the implications might be in the real world.

So, again, that sort of clears up in terms of what we do here in the Legislature, but I wanted to know what impacts this might have in terms of other legislation, in terms of how the government or the Province recognizes independent versus private schools.

Mr. Goertzen: I do appreciate the question from my friend from Concordia. I can assure him there's no nefarious intent to this. It simply ensures that, in the act, the schools—the independent schools are referred to in the way that they're referred to in every other way: in any correspondence, in the department, publicly, the independent school association, in every way independent schools are referred to as independent schools except in the act where they're called private schools.

So they wanted to be aligned to reflect what they are called in every other place.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it's interesting the minister goes right to the nefarious part, you know, because I thought I was asking these questions in a pretty straightforward way, but maybe there is something

more to this now that the minister, I guess, references them in that way.

And I guess that sort of leads me to my larger question about the format of the way that this government has brought forward a number of bills. Of course, this is one of them, but many others, what are usually considered omnibus bills or sort of pick bits and pieces out of different acts and put them all together.

Wondering, why is it that the minister has chosen three omnibus bills to bring forward before the Legislature in this session?

Mr. Goertzen: Just for clarification, I did not, if you—if my friend looks back in Hansard, did not suggest that he was saying there was anything nefarious. I assured him that there was nothing nefarious.

This is a routine way in which to minor amendments are—corrections are normally done. He could speak to the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who, I know, when he was the member—minister of Justice-Attorney General, brought forward numerous variations of this type of act. This has been done this way for at least decades, if not longer, in the Manitoba Legislature, and so it continues on in that routine way.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, once again, under normal circumstances, I would agree with the minister. However, I think the way that this session has played out thus far, this session of the Legislature, it's certainly been anything but routine, and so, once again, we're dealing with a bill in the middle of Estimates. We were in Estimates yesterday. We're now dealing with this particular bill, and so, again, it just sort of gives me pause and makes me wonder why exactly the minister has stopped the debate on the Estimates process, has moved into this bill and maybe he can explain what changes within this bill are so pressing that he needed to interrupt the Estimates process.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm happy to explain that from a House leader's perspective.

We were somewhat surprised as a government yesterday that the opposition chose to try to stall the Estimates process by doing what they do, with their long reading of petitions. It seemed that the opposition had no interest in getting into Estimates yesterday, trying to do everything they could to prevent Estimates from starting at a reasonable time.

So I thought, as a House leader, what would be the one bill that they couldn't potentially have any objection to and would actually not try to delay and stall. And I figured, well, it must be the minor amendments and corrections act because there's been no opposition in the history of this jurisdiction of Manitoba with any self-respect that would try to stall this bill.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd to thank the minister for bringing forward the bill.

We're just wondering: Who did the member consult with for the changes from Oji-Cree to Ojibwe-Cree?

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

The amendments are required to the preamble and in section 1 updating the spelling for Ojibway and Oji-Cree and Ojibwe and 'Ojipee-Cree-re'. Indigenous Languages of Manitoba, the primary indigenous language translation organization Manitoba, uses these spellings. The Indigenous Languages of Manitoba used a stringent vetting 'advisory' process to hire translators, and these translators provide services for the seven official indigenous languages recognized in Manitoba under The Aboriginal Languages Recognition Act.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister talks about delay, and yet the only delay I could see yesterday was a delay in the Minister of Health in answering some pretty important questions, I know, for my community and others, about the closure of Concordia Hospital. Now, I do have the minister, who is formerly the minister of Health and somebody who was the architect of these cuts. Maybe he could shed some light onto—on—for the House on exactly when the closure of Concordia Hospital ER will take place?

Mr. Goertzen: I'd ask you to call the member to order for relevance, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: And I would concur with the honourable Minister of Education. We are here to deal with The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, and I would ask the member to keep his comments and questions relevant to that particular act.

Mr. Wiebe: I was simply giving the minister an opportunity to finally stand up and answer a question here, but obviously he doesn't want to do that and there's certainly nothing minor about the change to our community and the cut to the Concordia Hospital and just how important that is.

* (16:20)

So, once again, I'm just going to ask the minister why exactly this bill has taken precedence over those kinds of important questions that obviously the community is asking us as legislators to bring forward and to ask of ministers. Why is he instead calling forward this bill, which he calls routine and housekeeping?

Mr. Goertzen: Again, Madam Speaker, the opposition spent 45 minutes yesterday delaying getting into Estimates. I was simply trying to find something that would demonstrate they actually want to do some work in the Legislature, but perhaps I misunderstood their own desire to do any work.

Mr. Wiebe: It's quite a change for the minister to—from his role in opposition to now as minister when I know he was happy to bring forward petitions. I don't think I've heard him bring any petitions forward since becoming a minister, which I'm kind of surprised about. I can say that members on this side will happily bring those petitions every single day to this Legislature and read them on behalf of Manitobans.

But, once again, I'm simply asking: Why does the minister believe that it's important for members of this House to ask—why isn't it important for this—members of this House to ask ministers questions on Estimates and expenditures, as we did yesterday?

Mr. Goertzen: I have no concern or problems with the member or the opposition bringing forward petitions, but, clearly, when they read them at a speed like an old record player on two speeds set too low, Madam Speaker, that is a clear obstruction and they're trying to delay getting to the business of the House.

Members opposite clearly didn't have any questions yesterday in Estimates, and so they delayed getting to it. So I chose to pick a bill that they couldn't have any opposition to, so they can prove to Manitobans they're actually willing to do some work.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions? The floor—oh, the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Yes. I had a question—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, order.

Mr. Lamont: I just had a question. As far as there's a change to The Path to Reconciliation Act. They—it amends to the tabling of the annual report, but it removes the requirement to make it available to the public.

So, either two questions: One, has—have we ever—has the government produced one of these reports, and why have they removed the requirement to make it public?

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the member for the questions. The amendments are required to subsection 5(2) and 5(3) and section 6. Subsection 5(2) is amended by adding standard wording for the tabling of a report in the Legislative Assembly. This language allows the report, in effect, to be tabled up to six months after the end of the fiscal year instead of three—the three-month period currently required.

Subsection 5(3) is amended by updating the spelling of the different Cree nations. The indigenous languages in Manitoba—the primary indigenous translation organization of Manitoba uses these spellings. They use a stringent vetting and advisory process to hire translators and use translators to provide services for the seven official indigenous languages recognized in Manitoba under The Aboriginal Languages Recognition Act.

Mr. Lamont: And I've just got a question, because there's a slight change to the—to remove Food and Rural Development from the agriculture act.

I recognize that there is actually more to rural Manitoba than simply agriculture, and not to diminish agriculture in any way, but can the member—the minister please just explain what the—whether the motivation for that—or, is that—is there any implication of a removal of other kinds of development other than agricultural development?

Mr. Goertzen: There are no other legislative changes that are being made to these acts, meaning the acts to refer to matters affecting food in rural areas. And thus the role and scope of the department activities are not being changed, but the name of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is being changed to the Department of Agriculture. And that is why the amendments need to be made.

Madam Speaker: Any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If there are no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I do appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House once again and put some words on the record with regards to Bill 24.

I do hope this afternoon to talk about some specifics of the bill and spend some time, you know, sort of just picking apart, I guess, pieces of—that I'm, you know, reading and sort of trying to pick through the minister's answers and get some context to. But I guess I'm also hoping to put some broad comments on the record with regards to how this legislation was brought forward.

Firstly, Madam Speaker, I, you know, once again, want to comment ever so briefly on the—just how abnormal, I guess, you know, parts of this particular legislative session have been. And, you know, there are probably members here who were elected just three short years ago who, you know, feel that they're now starting to get their feet underneath them, maybe understanding a little bit about the rules.

I can tell you after being here for a lot longer than that that I'm still struggling to get my feet underneath me in terms of some of the rules and procedures within the House. But there are sort of a few major milestones or major parts of a legislative session that sort of happen every year. And they—you know, I wouldn't say they happen like clockwork, Madam Speaker, but certainly with the advent of a more set legislative schedule or a calendar, and then coupled with sort of the major expectations of a government with regards to Throne Speech and budget—these are things that usually as legislators we can count on and we can sort of understand how they'll be brought forward and what the purpose of those—bringing those items forward are.

Now, I would suggest that bill—what's in this session called Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, is certainly one of those pieces of legislation. As the minister said ever so briefly—and I got to say, there's probably a record for the shortage—shortest second reading speech that we've seen in the Legislature; that might be it. Usually, speeches of that length are reserved for first reading and for the introduction of a bill, but certainly not when, you know, the expectation is that all members here are coming to the debate and are ready to spend at least half an hour—although I would imagine somebody has unlimited speaking time—so there is, of course, that opportunity for someone—or, I guess one from each party, major party in the Legislature to spend more than half an hour speaking

to these bills—and, when doing so, would want to have the context and a bit more information about the intent to work with.

Now, the minister has—as I said, he brought forward this bill, mentioned that it was routine, mentioned that it was housekeeping, mentioned that this is something that, you know, usually is not—be contested or held up in any way and is something that we can find broad agreement on. And, again, as I said—you know, in the many years that I've been here that I found, you know, obviously that to be the case; most times, this is very much a routine bill. However, the reason, of course, that I have asked some of the questions that I've asked and I'm—as I said, I'm sure many members on the opposition benches will want to spend time debating this particular bill, is because of the way that this government has treated the legislative process, certainly in recent months.

This all started, of course, Madam Speaker, with the budget implementation and tax statutes act, which, you know, was brought forward, I believe, the day after the budget was brought forward. So without any debate on the actual budget amendment, the tax statutes portion, the BITSA, Bill 16 was brought forward for debate, sort of putting the cart before the horse, if you will, in terms of how we normally debate items in this Legislature.

Now, it was mentioned at that time by the House leader, well, you asked last year to have the BITSA bill brought forward earlier. And so this is us fulfilling that request. Again, taken at its face value, might make sense. However, of course, we know that it was presented in a way that was—the government was attempting to jam the opposition and put us in an uncomfortable place.

Well, of course, it didn't work, the government's plan and political machinations when it came to how exactly they were going to present the bill, Bill 16, the BITSA bill, because of course we as an opposition supported that bill, moving it forward in the legislative process, making sure that Manitobans understand that unless the Premier (Mr. Pallister) wants to call an election, items like the PST reduction would not be affected by the operation of this Legislature. Again, that remains to be seen whether that will happen, and I know every member of this House is waiting to see what the Premier will dream up next with regards to that.

* (16:30)

But, again, he was—it was brought forward, and the reason why there was concern right away, beyond the obvious, was because in recent years, the government has used BITSA in a way that has never been done before, I would suggest, Madam Speaker. You know, the budget implementation and tax statutes act is one of those bills, very much like Bill 24, where, you know, this is simply an execution, if you will, of the government's plan when it comes to their budget. And that is, of course, laid out in the budget document for all to see, and it's something that every legislator on the government side should be proud to talk about.

Now, why would they not be proud to talk about what's in their budget bill? Because, of course, Madam Speaker, there were some major cuts that were undertaken in the first iteration of the BITSA bill, which, you know, I would commend members on the opposition benches who dug through that document, found the egregious parts and then managed to organize around, you know, what is normally not a bill that garners much attention. And instead, we had committee rooms that were full. We had media that was packing the gallery to listen to debate on it to find out exactly what this government was trying to cut. Through an omnibus bill and without anybody noticing, they were trying to cut the 50-50 funding to municipalities.

So this is what—this was the goal of the government, obviously, to try to hide this cut, to try to slide it through without anybody noticing. And, again, as a working opposition, as legislators who take our duty to hold the government to account very seriously, we managed to stop that bill. We managed to hold it over, and again, organize and inform the public about exactly what was going on.

Again, I think, you know, the government is still feeling the repercussions of trying to pull a fast one, as they did. And again, we were proud to be part of trying to hold them up.

So then, fast-forward to the next year: BITSA comes again. And the government says, no, no, don't worry about it, no big deal, nothing going to be in this one either, and says, we'll just rise on our usual date, beginning of June. Don't worry about it, BITSA's coming, but you won't have to know what's in that.

Well, did we take that sitting down? Of course not, Madam Speaker, and we held this legislator—Legislature here through the summer, into the summer months, to force this government to finally

make a deal to finally release the BITSA bill, in that case, in the middle of summer.

And so what did they do? They had, you know, pieces of legislation within there, probably egregious pieces of legislation, that were not then moved forward on because we held them to account, and that was the process that we took.

So why am I telling you all of this, Madam Speaker? The point here is that when routine pieces of legislation come before this Chamber, the expectation is that members of this Legislature will look through it, obviously take some care to make sure that there are no parts of this that we have concerns with, but otherwise, understand that they although have a legislative process that they must follow in order to be implemented, that they are, ultimately, seen to be routine.

And as I said, I've been here for a number of years, and every year, they are passed through without barely a notice. Barely anyone spends any time—well, maybe I'm speaking only for myself here; I'm sure members read through these documents and these bills very carefully, understand exactly which acts they pertain to. And again, the media, I'm sure, is behind, in their offices right now, listening closely and paying close attention to Bill 24.

But, however, why am I saying all of this? Well, again, Madam Speaker, it's because that has not been the practice of this government, and, in fact, in this very session, there have been number—a number of times that the legislative agenda has been turned on its head, and turned on its head in a way to purposely try to pull the wool over Manitobans' eyes about what this government is all about.

So we have this bill in front of us, and as I said, I've spent time reading through it and carefully, as best I can, analyzing every piece of it. However, when I, you know, hear the minister give a speech that was, well, probably counted in the seconds rather than even in the minutes and, you know, can't get a straight answer out of the minister about some of the pieces of this bill, which are probably of great concern to a lot of people, it gives us pause. It gives us an opportunity to debate this and to, hopefully, get some clarity through the debate from the opposition.

The other—or, the other way that we as legislators usually get our information is through a bill briefing; a briefing that is offered to opposition. It's usually given in a non-partisan fashion. It's given in a way that allows the drafters of the bill,

the civil servants, the experts, maybe, on this—on the legislation, to give legislators an idea of what is in the bill. And that, however, was not done. It was not given for this bill. So it gives me a bit of a pause and gives me a bit of concern, and it, again, gives me an opportunity to speak a little bit further about this and, hopefully, get some answers in the debate that will come forward.

The major piece of this bill that I started with that gives me the most concern, and I was hoping to get a bit more context from the minister, was with regards to part 2, private schools. So I'm just going to read that into the record, Madam Speaker. That is, amendments to change, quote, private school to, quote, independent school. And this is section 22. The acts listed in the schedule are amended as described in the schedule.

Madam Speaker, again, I was hoping to get a little bit more context from the minister how this—what this exactly means. I'm not sure that I got that. I'm hoping, again, I'll get some more information as the afternoon unfolds. But this is the schedule as it reads here. The following acts are amended in the provisions listed opposite the title of the act by striking out, quote, private school, end quote, wherever it occurs and substituting, quote, independent school, end quote, with necessary grammatical changes.

Here are the acts that are listed. Name of the act: The Adult Learning Centres Act. Provisions amended are (1) quote, private school, and (1) quote, recognized educational institution, end quote, which is section 12(2); The Apprenticeship and Certification Act, section 16(b)(ii); The City of Winnipeg Charter, 163(1)(c) and section 163(2), section 317(c); The Education Administration Act, which is sections 1, quote, private school, end quote, section 3(1)(c.1), (e), (m) and (n)(i), (3.1)(1), (3.2)(2)(b) and (c), section 3.2(3)(d) and 3.2(5); The Environment Act: section 40.10(1), quote, school; The Highway Traffic Act, and et cetera, et cetera.

So there's a number of concerns here, Madam Speaker, because this does, of course, impact on schools in Manitoba, and, as the minister has mentioned, there are—there is a robust independent school association; there is an independent school association, which has done, of course, good work in advocating for their schools, and I do think play an important role in Manitoba.

And it occurs to me that on the eve of the beginning of the education review—I see the former

minister of Education sitting across the way here; I would imagine he'll be at the education review this evening—a time when Manitobans have been asked to go out and review the education system in a way that is, you know, hasn't been done in a very, very long time and to put some serious, you know, thought and work towards what the future of the education system might look like in Manitoba, it occurs to me that while we're about to start that process, we're already making changes with regards to the education act within Bill 24.

* (16:40)

Now I don't think I have to explain to the Clerk and to the Speaker of the House how it makes perfect sense that I'm talking about the education review with regards to how this bill amends the education act. So I'm hoping that we'll just have a bit of opportunity to talk about that because that is what this bill. And I can continue to read the schedule, if that would maybe make the clerks and the Speaker more comfortable—but certainly I think the debate could be a bit more substantive, rather than just talking simply about the text in the schedule.

Again, I think it's important, as we talk about the education review, if we are starting from a level playing field, from a baseline where education was well funded in this province, where it was—where teachers were respected, where administrators were respected, where the role of school divisions was respected, where the role of school trustees was respected, that might be a place where Manitobans could dream about what the next steps with regards to education in the province might look like.

However, once again, we are not starting from that place. We are starting from a place where we've seen cuts to the education system throughout the year, we've seen year over year—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I'm just going to urge that the member, in his debate, zero in on the relevance of the specific legislation that is on the floor for debate right now, which is Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, and I would just urge the member that he is straying quite a bit off of the topic that is encompassed within this bill. So I would ask the member to zero in on the relevance of the bill as he is speaking about education.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, I'm not sure how much more zeroed in I can be. We're talking about Bill 24, which is the minor amendments and corrections act,

which specifically talks about in section 2, Private Schools, and this is an amendment to change the private schools to independent schools act.

These acts which are being affected are, as I mentioned, in the schedule and the schedules are as follows: The Adult Learning Centres Act; The Apprenticeship and Certification Act; The City of Winnipeg Charter; The Education Administration Act; The Environment Act; The Highway Traffic Act; The International Education Act; The Municipal Assessment Act; The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act, unproclaimed; The Private Vocational Institutions Act; The Protecting Children (Information Sharing) Act; and The Public Schools Act.

So, Madam Speaker, when we're talking about The Public Schools Act which is what Bill 24 amends, I think it's very clear that we can talk about the government's undertaking of a system-wide review to change The Public Schools Act with regards to how the funding of schools should happen.

Now, I will try my best to keep it as zeroed in as possible. But I can't—I mean, I literally am reading from the bill, Madam Speaker, so I'm not sure how much more relevant one can get.

It's important, as I said, literally on the day that we're talking about education with the public, the government has undertaken their education review; they're out to south Winnipeg today and now they're bringing forward a bill, Bill 24, which amends the education act. So I think it's very—The Public Schools Act—so I think it is very relevant here, Madam Speaker.

Because in this review, it's not just a review of public schools, it's a review of—from what I understand, it also includes what's now going to be called independent schools, what have been known as private schools. And those schools want to have a voice at the table, as well. It's a concern to them. It's a concern to them that funding has been cut not only in The Public Schools Act but also, of course, across the board and it's been affecting all education. When it comes to K-to-12 education in this system, they have been feeling the crunch. There has been a real pressure on those schools.

So, when I ask the minister very straightforward questions about the impact that this change might have, I think that there needs to be a more robust debate, rather than the simple, 30-second introductory speech and, again, you know, an answer

that I don't think gave the full scope of what this change might mean.

You know, I appreciate—[*interjection*]

Now the minister wants to step up and speak. He wouldn't do that when he was given the opportunity, and yet now he wants to chirp from his chair, and I'm hoping the Speaker will just call members to order so that they can pay close attention to just how relevant this speech is so that they'll know exactly how my argument continues to wind around and to focus in on why this is so important.

Well, you know, members might want to—well, I'll just leave it for their speeches and return the favour when it comes to participation from my chair.

So, as I said, Madam Speaker, this is a concern and this continues to be a concern. So as I go out and I speak to teachers, as I go out and I speak to educators, I'm very, very glad that I can also offer to the mix comments on Bill 24, because this is what they are concerned about. They're concerned about other ways that the government has used these kinds of omnibus bills to try to bring forward legislation and changes that are of concern to them.

Now, I don't know if I'm going to be able to give them much clarity, as I said, based on what we're discussing here this afternoon. But I do think that there is an opportunity to at least start the conversation—at least begin the conversation with them and say, you know, this is a change that is coming forward again with no bill briefing, no comment from the government—sort of just trying to slip it through. And we don't know the impact of this, and I do hope that they'll add their voices to the conversation, which I do hope will continue to happen going forward.

And now there are other pieces of this particular bill which are of concern, and they have been raised here as well, with regards to section 17, subsection 1, The Path to Reconciliation Act. And I do appreciate the opportunity—or, the fact that members opposite—or, members of the second opposition also brought forward concerns with regards to this.

Now, I only have a few comments with regards to this. I'm sure other members can spend more time and more—can speak more—with more authority or knowledge when it comes to the importance of this particular piece of the legislation, The Path to Reconciliation Act. But I guess I'll just offer some sort of larger comments with regards to this.

We have seen very little action with regards to reconciliation on the part of this government. I would suggest, in fact, that there have been—there has been more damage done rather than a true reconciliation. And so, while I appreciate that this is now in the bill, that this is here to, you know, give some guidance and, hopefully, this report will now be tabled and is tabled in the House, again giving members some clarity—I do appreciate the fact that the translation of the report is now also listed here within this—Bill 24. That's section 5, subsection 3, where it says the minister must also arrange for the report or a summary of it to be translated into the language of Cree, Dakota, Dene, 'inuktituk', Michif—that's a new one for me, Madam Speaker, I'm learning as we go here—Ojibwe, Ojibwe-Cree, and, of course, to make that translation available to the public. You know, I do think that this goes a long way in, you know, a practical sense, of course, but also in a symbolic way in terms of including our First Nations.

I had an opportunity to travel to Yellowknife a few years back as a legislator as part of the Public Accounts committee, and went there with several members opposite and members of our caucus, and was quite impressed with their Legislative Assembly—not only the building itself and the members who occupy it, but also the way that they do put such an emphasis on translation and inclusion of all of the First Nations and indigenous people that occupy the territory.

And it was absolutely awe-inspiring to see within their chamber. Where we have one small booth dedicated to translation—of course, translating into the two official languages of the province, there they have a whole—two whole walls of those same kind of booths that are used to translate into the different languages on—from what I understand, in a real-time way. In the same way that we have the option to switch back and forth here between French and English, they have the opportunity there to switch back between a number of indigenous languages.

* (16:50)

And, again, I think there's a practical piece to that. There's a practical part that has an impact on how you communicate with people that live in your province, who are members of your community, but I think there's also the larger or equally as important symbolic gesture that is undertaken when that happens. And so I do hope that that's something, this is a piece of this legislation that can be taken out, can

be expanded on, can be used in other ways and can just, again, you know, hopefully, be a part of the part of the process of reconciliation in this province that I do think has been lacking over the last while, certainly under this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and under this government's watch.

So this is a step in the right direction, but I do—and, again, I'm not the authority on this, so there may be other concerns, you know. It wouldn't surprise me, but, you know, not something on the face of it, I think, that, you know, gives me any pause, anyway.

So, as I said, Madam Speaker, when it comes to pieces of legislation like Bill 24, while even in the title it's called minor, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, and you know, I'm going through the individual clauses. You know, a lot of times it literally is a change in spelling or a change in grammar, changes to the translation in the French version. So, while these are obviously minor and, obviously, as the minister said, routine or housekeeping, when, taken as a whole, there are some concerns within this bill, and I do think that it warrants some larger conversation.

It warrants more than just a quick 30-second introduction and it warrants more than, you know, sort of a quick question period back and forth, 45 seconds. Given half an hour, I'm sure each minister around the table, whose departments these amendments affect, and again, there are a number of them going everything from The Cooperatives Act to The Elections Act, to The Income Tax Act, to The Highway Traffic Act, to The Regulated Health Professions Act, to the red tape reduction act, to The Path to Reconciliation Act, to the public interest disclosure act, and I could go on, Madam Speaker.

Each one of the ministers in government, I'm sure, are excited and anxious to get up to spend half an hour speaking to their concerns with this bill or maybe, you know, maybe alleviating some of our concerns, but to spend that time in a productive way. And I do hope that that's something that we do here this afternoon.

With regards to how this is being brought forward, though, Madam Speaker, it once again seems like the government is using omnibus legislation at every turn. So whether this is to be categorized in that same vein remains to be seen. As I said, I am hoping to get some clarification on that, but there is certainly a concern when pieces of legislation that are usually routine, that are usually brought before this Legislature in a way that

allows us to sort of function going smoothly forward, are being used in a way that are obviously not straightforward and they obviously have other items that they are trying to push through.

With regards to Bill 16, it didn't work. You know, as I said, the members on this side of the House were happy to stand up and to say—not to play the game that the Premier wants Manitobans to play with regards to guessing when the next election might be and how he might jeopardize any tax measures that he's gone out and promised. We wanted to get out of the way of that, to say to Manitobans, clearly it's only the Premier now who jeopardizes the straightforward functioning of the Legislature, and, once again, hopefully we can get to that point with this piece of legislation, where all of our concerns are set aside, that we understand very clearly that this isn't another opportunity for the government to push forward legislation that, you know, has different consequences or different intentions rather than what's obvious here before us.

I'm hoping we'll get to that point. We have only a little bit of time this afternoon, but certainly there is a lot of opportunity to bring forward this bill going forward and I do ask the government to make sure that they continue to do that.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm a little surprised, I suppose, that I'm up here debating Bill 24, the minor amendments and corrections act, this afternoon. I thought, as did most of my colleagues, and I presume the Liberal members, that we'd be having a second day of Estimates.

We finally got around to Estimates yesterday, and we had thought we would have another day to ask questions, if not get answers, from ministers. I sat in this Chamber all afternoon yesterday as the Minister of Health was either unable or unwilling—and I believe most of us in this side know he was unwilling—to answer questions about when the emergency rooms at Concordia Hospital and Seven Oaks hospital are going to close.

And as I was—put on the record yesterday, and as was put on the record today, it may be that Concordia Hospital's emergency room is closing in only a matter of weeks, but the Minister of Health was unable or unwilling—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —to provide an answer.

And certainly, I suppose it's tiring not answering questions all afternoon, so maybe the Minister of Health needed a break. Maybe it was the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that needed a break. We know the Premier gets very, very antsy when he has to sit in Estimates for more than about an hour and a half or two hours at a time, so maybe that's why we're now back—

An Honourable Member: Got to listen to you, that's why.

Mr. Swan: Well, and now I hear the member for Southdale (Mr. Smith), who, obviously, wants to get up and speak to this bill. I'll give him the opportunity after I've had a chance to put my comments on the record.

So maybe that's why we're doing this. Maybe Bill 24 is an attempt by this government to hide the fact that this is the thinnest, weakest, most hopeless legislative agenda that has come before this House probably since the Liberals were in power in Manitoba.

And I've had a look. I mean, you can check the bill's status, Madam Speaker, and you can check the Order Paper. There's a grand total of 20 bills that have either gone off to committee because they were brought in in time by this government, or they're one of the five bills held back by the New Democratic caucus or by the Liberal caucus: 20 bills.

A grand total of 20 bills, which is, I would say, the lightest, weakest legislative agenda in decades and decades; proof that this is a government which is truly, truly out of gas, completely out of gas.

And what's interesting as well, Madam Speaker—and I do agree with the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) that it is usual that a government brings in a statute like this. What is really unusual is when a government brings in not one, but two statutes like this.

We have Bill 6, that's now gone off to committee, the statutes correction and minor amendments act. We also now have Bill 24, the

minor amendments and corrections act. This is a government that has so little to do and so little to say, and so little to offer the province of Manitoba, they have to bifurcate their bills to even make it look like they're doing anything. And that is quite embarrassing.

And, of course, when you look at what other bills they have on the thin Order Paper, well, they've got The Interim Appropriation Act, 2020: an interim appropriation act which isn't even going to take effect until after they get defeated in the election, which is quite remarkable.

They had other bills they called even without having called for debate bills that had a deadline. We had Bill 25 just the other day. I tried to ask the minister of the—minister of municipal affairs a couple of questions about why his red tape bill was adding more red tape and why he was taking away the right of successful taxpayers who challenge their assessments to get some modicum of interest from municipalities. That day didn't go very well.

And I know the minister for municipal affairs who, thankfully, in question period the other day, got up and admitted that there is no reason the PST increase couldn't have happened on July 1st. It took exactly 48 seconds of questioning for the minister to give that up.

So here we are. Here we are with this bill, which is not the first of its kind this session. It's the second of its kind, or arguably, if you look through Bill 14, the reducing red tape and improving services act, it's really three bills—three bills in one, or I suppose, one bill in three, as this government tries to pretend that they're actually out there doing something active.

So well—[interjection]—and I hear the Government House Leader, who is so disappointed—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have 25 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Tabling of Reports		Manitoba's Economy	
Squires	1521	Reyes	1530
		Fielding	1530
Members' Statements		K-to-12 Education Review	
Geoff and Regan Archambault		Lamont	1531
Yakimoski	1521	Pallister	1531
National Day of Mourning		Workplace Health and Safety	
Lindsey	1521	Lindsey	1532
		Friesen	1532
Kaitlin McCarthy and Jessi Coulter		Pallister	1533
Isleifson	1522	Speaker's Ruling	
		Driedger	1533
Corrina Avila and Calia Paclé		Petitions	
Wiebe	1522	Daylight Saving Time	
Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement		Graydon	1534
Wowchuk	1523	Northern Health Care	
Oral Questions		Lindsey	1534
Cardiac Surgery Cancellations		Early Learning and Child-Care Programs	
Kinew	1523	Altemeyer	1535
Pallister	1524	Lathlin	1535
		Allum	1536
Health-Care Reform		Lamoureux	1536
Kinew	1525	Lamont	1537
Pallister	1525	T. Marcelino	1537
		F. Marcelino	1537
Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals		Swan	1538
Kinew	1526	Wiebe	1538
Pallister	1526		
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Lifeflight Air Ambulance		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Lathlin	1526	Second Readings	
Friesen	1526	Bill 24—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019	
Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals		Goertzen	1539
B. Smith	1527	Questions	
Friesen	1527	Wiebe	1539
Methamphetamine Addiction		Goertzen	1540
Lamont	1528	Lamoureux	1541
Friesen	1528	Lamont	1541
Pallister	1529	Debate	
Tobacco Prices		Wiebe	1542
Swan	1529	Swan	1547
Fielding	1529		
Pallister	1530		

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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