

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

*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.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Madam Speaker:** Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table, pursuant to The Statutes and Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered under the act after the last regulation tabled in this House and more than 14 days before the commencement of this session.

**Madam Speaker:** Ministerial statements?

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Manitoba Values

**Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert):** Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to serve as the MLA for the great and diverse constituency of St. Norbert.

Je tiens également à vous féliciter, Madame la Présidente, sur votre sélection en tant que Président ici à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba.

#### *Translation*

*I also wish to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your selection as Speaker here in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.*

#### *English*

I also want to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, again on your election as the Speaker here at the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

Moving forward, our new government led by our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has talked about Manitoba

values. Manitoba's values are our values: trust, compassion, common sense, inclusion and teamwork.

Let me talk about compassion. It is a value that binds us together as Manitobans. We care deeply about our communities and one another. We volunteer and donate to charity each and every day. We do not—we do so not just because we are compassionate people, but because we know in doing so we can help others become who they can be.

And in my constituency of St. Norbert, a diverse riding, Khaled Al-Nahar is one of many citizens who shows that compassion. He serves on a neighbourhood committee that organizes activities around Christmas for families and kids in the park across the street from their home for the joy of the season's spirit.

At his local mosque in St. Norbert and as a member of the Manitoba Islamic Association, he chairs his financial assistance committee, a committee that manages the donated funds to help local needy families in the area for a number of years. He also serves as a local khateeb in the mosque, delivering the sermon.

Khaled spreads his wealth of volunteerism in many diverse ways for our community, for St. Norbert and Manitoba.

I have been to the mosque on numerous occasions. Mr. Al-Nahar and his colleagues have invited everyone to their open houses, most recently on May 8th, and they have held monthly Foodoramas, where you can sample the local cuisine from the countries of origin from the Muslim community.

Mr. Al-Nahar represents those values I mentioned: trust, common sense, inclusion, teamwork, and certainly compassion, Madam Speaker.

I ask the members of the House to stand and applaud and acknowledge his efforts, along with his wife, Maisa, on being a champion volunteer in St. Norbert and a great example of having those Manitoba values. They are here today in the gallery.

Salamat. Miigwech. Merci. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Will you please join and rise with me today?

### **Wanda Koop**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, Wanda Koop is one of Canada's most important and creative contemporary artists. Her career has spanned four decades and includes more than 50 major solo exhibitions.

Amongst her numerous national and international honours, Wanda was recently chosen to become a member of the Order of Manitoba.

Wanda has expressed her artistic passion through community work and social activism. Almost 20 years ago, she saw a need for accessible arts programming in Winnipeg.

Through—though her art has been displayed in shows all over the world, the spirit of her hometown has long been an influence. Wanda was given a life-changing opportunity when she was offered 10 free art classes. The positive effects of these classes motivated her to work with children's art programming later in life.

Seeing a need for more accessible art programming, she started an art studio for children, Art City, in a small space on Broadway. It was the first organization of its kind in Canada, and it has been a major driver of Winnipeg's quirky and vibrant arts scene.

The spirit of Art City is what makes Wanda's vision so admirable: that community art programming should be accessible to all. Art City has flourished as a free-of-charge, not-for-profit entrance into Winnipeg's arts and cultural scene for people of all ages. Art City's mission is to create a positive and expanding cultural impact on the city. And with the help of community partners, they have helped to foster self-expression and pride in their young students.

On behalf of all members in this House, I am so proud to say thank you and congratulations to Wanda Koop on becoming a member of the Order of Manitoba.

### **Envirothon**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Madam Speaker, I'm going to take this opportunity to rise in the House today to congratulate the two Envirothon teams from Swan Valley Regional Secondary School, sponsored by the Swan Lake Watershed Conservation District, who moved on from regional

competition and competed with 22 other teams at the provincial Envirothon competition in Pinawa this past weekend.

Envirothon is a competition where students study wildlife, forestry, aquatics and soils, as well as current issues surrounding conservation and environmentalism.

This year, the current issue topic is invasive species. In addition to answering questions on all five topic areas mentioned above, the students are challenged with an oral question. All five team members deliver a 10-minute response to this question. This year, the students were challenged with developing a detection plan on a particular invasive species.

As we all know, this is a very timely topic for the team representing Manitoba, as species such as European buckthorn, purple loosestrife, emerald ash borer, zebra mussels and others are a threat to our aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

This competition engages the students in hands-on activities and problem-solving skills to give them the tools to become the future stewards of their environment. This was exemplified in 2011, when all five of the students from our community won the North American championship held in Sackville, New Brunswick. This was done by defeating all 46 state champions and the nine provincial and territory champions. All five team members pursued careers related to the environment.

\* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Grant Park High school, this year's provincial champs, as well as many thanks to the Manitoba Forestry Association, the steering committee of volunteers, the numerous sponsors and all of the dedicated students and advisers for their hard work contributing to the success of a program and making a difference in our great province.

Thank you.

### **Teddy Bears' Picnic**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, this past Sunday was the 30th annual Teddy Bears' Picnic at Assiniboine Park. I congratulate all who were involved in putting on this amazing event, providing opportunities for young Manitobans to explore and to learn about the world of health care and to have fun at the same time.

As I was serving pancakes to young visitors along with Mayor Brian Bowman, Karly Troschuk, and Marcy Markusa, I looked out over the surrounding tents and the long lineups, just like at real emergency rooms, as children waited patiently to get their pet animals, whether bears or alligators, fixed up. Doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, child-life workers and psychologists were all there to help, giving a sense of reality, but also a sense that the Children's Hospital is staffed with real, caring people.

From its beginning 30 years ago, I have been privileged to be able to be a part of this extraordinary event. Initially, I was in the bear tent listening to the woes, the injuries and the heartaches of the bears as they came in, brought by concerned children. For the last 23 years I have been there almost every year serving pancakes or helping in other ways.

There are some people like John Myers, Bernie Martins, Chris Anderson, Ernest Shapera, Marie-Alice Grassick and Colleen Horbay who have been there from the beginning and who have shown incredible dedication and energy in ensuring this event is a success every year whether the sun is shining or the rain is coming down. It is a venue where children can have fun and can learn to overcome their fears of having to go to a hospital just through experiencing the people and the smiles at the Teddy Bears' Picnic.

### St. Vital Museum

**Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital):** It's my pleasure to stand here today to bring my very first member's statement and bring you attention to the newly expanded St. Vital Museum.

I was honoured to be a guest at the official reopening of this little gem of a facility this past Saturday at their spring barbecue. It was incredible to see what they've done in this space with very little money and very little staff, but with the tenacity to see the project through. Volunteers have been and will continue to be the lifeblood of this project and many others like it.

Since the opening of the St. Vital Museum in 2008, the museum under the direction of Mr. Bob Holliday has been constantly updating and expanding. Located in the old St. Vital fire station at 600 St. Mary's Road, this small museum is an official heritage site. It's a pleasure to have Mr. Holliday here with us today in the gallery.

The museum's goal is to tell the stories and present a pictorial history of such pioneers as Abraham Guay, Victor Mager, Joseph and Marie St. Germain, Frederick Hulton, William and Mary Ann McDowell, Peter Tod, and St. Vital's most famous son, Louis Riel, preserving the history of the second oldest settlement in Winnipeg.

The huge expansion follows the reconstruction of the concrete floor in the 102-year-old former fire hall, police station and magistrate's court. The newly expanded portion of the museum includes the addition of the space formerly used by the Winnipeg paramedic service and now contains the Victor Mager room which holds a settee set and Mr. Major's reading chair, which both date back to the 1890s.

I want to extend my sincere good wishes to the board of the St. Vital Museum on the work they've done and they continue to do. I encourage everyone to take a tour of this facility where you will see new displays as well as other attractions including the restored 1939 Fargo fire truck, all eight Guess Who gold records and the keys used to lock up Louis Riel following his arrest in Battoche, Saskatchewan.

Congratulations, Mr. Holliday, and everyone at the St. Vital Historical Society on keeping St. Vital's history alive in such a wonderful way.

Miigwech, merci, thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to oral questions I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have from Sisler High School, 21 grade 9 students under the direction of Ming Di Zhao. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux).

Also in the public gallery from Neepawa Area Collegiate, 42 grade 9 students under the direction of Amy Spring, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke).

And also in the public gallery from Silverwinds School, grades 6, 7, 9 and 10 students under the direction of Adrian Hofer, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin).

And I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today family members of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen): Shelly

Friesen, his wife; Max and Dorreen Friesen, his father and stepmother; and Monica and Robert Friesen, his brother and sister-in-law.

And also in the Speaker's Gallery we have with us today my guests Janice and Tom Hyde.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you here today.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Budget 2016 Health and Education

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Manitobans have said that they are concerned that the Premier has a hidden agenda. We are seeing it already with support for corporate deals that do not provide new benefit for Manitobans.

Will the Premier ensure his budget and his government provides benefit for all Manitobans, not just the privileged few?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Thank you to my colleague for raising the issue of trust here in the House today.

Of course, we know the record of the previous administration was marred by a number of breaches of that trust in respect of Manitobans, and not least of which was a solemn vow they made to the people of Manitoba in the 2011 election campaign not to raise taxes. No taxes, they said, would be raised for a five-year period, and then within a period of just a few weeks, they decided to inflict new taxes and fees on Manitobans at a record level. And this hurt very much the lower income families in our province: seniors living on fixed incomes, single moms, folks who are struggling to survive financially.

We won't repeat the mistakes of the previous administration. In fact, those mistakes inspire us to make sure that we protect the best interests of all Manitobans and especially those most vulnerable in our population.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** I would like to remind the Premier it's hard to put an accusing finger on someone with relates to trust because three fingers are pointing to oneself.

Madam Speaker, I'm concerned that this budget will hold no real benefit for Manitobans. The Premier has yet failed to make serious commitments

to child care, affordable housing, student debt relief, nor will he define what front-line services he will protect.

How can the Premier say that he governs on behalf of all Manitobans, yet leaves so many Manitobans out?

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to recognizing the First Minister, I would just like to indicate to members in the gallery that there is to be no audience participation, which means that there's no clapping allowed from members in the gallery.

So thank you very much.

**Mr. Pallister:** I thank my colleague again for the question.

Protecting the most vulnerable in our province would consist of many, many things. I would note, though, that the members opposite had very significant commitments made in a variety of budgets which they failed to comply with, and because of that, Manitobans wait longer than the citizens of any other province for emergency health care.

\*(13:50)

Because of their lack of willingness to follow through on their stated commitments and words with deeds that resulted in actual betterment for Manitoba students, unfortunately, our quality of education suffers and Manitoba students most recently have ranked last in the number of national tests relative to students in other provinces.

So having failed to meet their own commitments in respect of supporting Manitobans on these two major examples of health care and education, I would expect that the members opposite would need to reflect, perhaps on their own—in their own quiet time, on whether the element of trust that should be inherent in these documents we'll be presenting today was ever present in the documents they placed before Manitobans in this House.

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

### Government Services Private Sector Review

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Manitobans are concerned about the inequality the Premier espouses. In this fiscal year, he is conducting a private sector review of

government services that he will keep hidden from the public.

Will he come clean today and commit to releasing his plans or will he leave it to us to find out his true intentions?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, I know that the members opposite have considerable expertise in cover-ups, Madam Speaker. Just look at Jets tickets or hidden agendas in respect of jacking up taxes. Look no further than a Tiger Dams report that is still unpublished from 2009. Look no further than a series of contracts given out to party donors and pals that was never disclosed for years.

Look no further than these actions and many, many others, Madam Speaker. You will see a sad example, I think, of a record of distrust that has fomented distrust among Manitobans, and Manitobans understand now, if they didn't over the last number of years, that they have been paying more to the previous administration and getting less for it.

We're going to reverse that, and this is the start of a new step today in a positive direction that will carve a new course for the people of Manitoba and for a better future for all Manitobans.

#### **Budget 2016 Employment Concerns**

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** Can the Premier tell the House today how many people are going to lose their jobs because he considers their work to be wasteful?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** In terms of job loss, the members opposite have some expertise. They noted that close to two thirds of their caucus lost their jobs in the last election because they failed to demonstrate any concern whatsoever, any concern, any real, any genuine concern for the people of Manitoba. Working families, seniors struggling, young people trying to find work here who were leaving in record numbers to go to other provinces: These are all conditions that we plan to reverse.

We are going to carve a new course. We're going to correct the dangers. We'll address the dangers, and we will repair the damage that the member opposite and his colleagues have created and those who are no longer with us helped create as well.

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

**Mr. Allum:** For a tall person, he sure runs in shallow waters.

In today's Free Press, Pat Wege from the Manitoba Child Care Association said she expected a robust announcement on child care that guarantees stable funding for child-care centres all across Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) assure Manitoba families and child-care workers that they can count on a robust plan for child care today?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'd respectfully remind the member that one of the first lessons one learns in studying to be an educator is that we teach our students not to refer to body type, as it's the advent of bullying tactics.

And I would mention to the member that out of— with no disrespect meant, but I would mention that to the member because that's not, I don't believe, a fair example to set for the young people who are here with us today.

Now, I would also mention that this culture of fear and bullying is not something that we will adhere to. What the member opposite is engaged in prior to the last election and chooses to continue to is a culture of fear mongering. Trying to frighten government employees, trying to frighten their families with job loss threats is something the member may choose to do to try to gain some misguided partisan advantage, but it is not something anyone should do with any respect for those families who he is frightening.

And I would warn him to be careful in respect of the lack of justification for such conduct as he continues to engage in it and continues to try to frighten perfectly good people who want to live a secure, healthy and hopeful life here in their province.

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

**Mr. Allum:** I'm sorry that that upset the Premier. I was merely pointing out that his answers are shallow to substantive questions that Manitoba families want answers to.

Budgets aren't—you see, the thing is, Madam Speaker, that budgets aren't just about numbers and they're not about spreadsheets; they're about people. They're about families, they're about children, they're

about seniors, and yet this government has made no intention to include those people in their budget calculations.

So I ask the Premier again: How many people are going to lose their jobs as a result of his budget today?

**Mr. Pallister:** I note that the member is inclusive in only one respect and that is in including all Manitobans in the paranoia that he depicts all too often in this House. He tries to strike fear into the hearts of working families and their children. He does it on a regular basis, and it's a misguided tactic that should not—well, it wasn't rewarded at the ballot box, but it should not be continued after the election.

Now, the fact of the matter is that the member—I accept the member's apology in respect of referencing body type. The shallowness of his questions, Madam Speaker, is in this respect: That he neglects—he makes comment, passing judgment already, on a document he has not yet read or seen; that in itself is a cause for some concern. I think Manitobans would observe and will observe, as they hear the budget today, that this concern, our concern for the best interests of Manitoba employees and the services they provide is genuine and real and it will be reflected in the very well-thought-out and very well consultative approach that we have taken in respect of preparing this document today. This stands in stark contrast to the lack of those factors in the previous government's conduct in every respect.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

#### **Brandon Manitoba New School Construction**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, enrolments are projected to double over the next five years at schools such as River Heights and King George in Brandon.

Will the government commit to building this school and build it now?

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

We are always pleased to move the education marker forward here in Manitoba. We want to improve education in Manitoba. We know that during the last government's era, quality of education had dropped significantly in some areas and we're certainly looking forward to the opportunity to

improve education for our young people here in Manitoba.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** I didn't hear an answer specific to those two schools in Brandon.

Anyway, this government also has left out many areas of the province, including Brandon, our second largest city. Our NDP government made major investments in infrastructure in Brandon which has seen significant growth in recent years. We put Brandon first.

Will this government commit to build the new school that our government announced for the south end of Brandon?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure):** And I thank the interim Leader of the Official Opposition for that question.

And our PC government is committed to be open and transparent. Our commitment is—while this—our commitment is to build roads, build relationships, rebuild the trust of Manitoba in their government.

The NDP was more interested in building bureaucracy and rewarding their friends, destroying any semblance of trust. We will rebuild that trust with Manitobans.

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

#### **Budget 2016 Manitoba Economy**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Again, there was not a single mention of any school in Brandon there.

Madam Speaker, this is a government that leaves things out and leaves people out. I'm going to predict that, in their budget today, this government will leave out recognition of the strong economic growth they inherited from the NDP with one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada and record growth in population.

Will this government acknowledge the strength of the Manitoba economy in challenging times?

\* (14:00)

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

We're always pleased to see the population in Manitoba grow and, particularly, with the type of immigration that we have had, and especially this year, with the large number of refugees, many of which are from Syria, that have been coming to Manitoba and will continue to come for the rest of the year to Manitoba. I was at an event, on Saturday, where there were 800 new people—new Manitobans here in Manitoba, and we want to make them all feel very welcome and so they can prosper here in Manitoba.

### **Nurse Training Medical School Spaces**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, today my question for the Minister of Health is simple: Will the minister commit to training the same number or more nurses in this province than we did last year?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Well, Madam Speaker, we made it very clear during the election campaign, a campaign I know the members don't want to remember even though they want to refight, that we will ensure that Manitoba is the most improved when it comes to ER wait times, other wait times and health-care services.

Now, I know that the member doesn't want to hear that. He didn't want to hear it in the Throne Speech, which he voted against. I'm sure he doesn't want to hear it in the budget, which I predict he'll vote against as well, because he doesn't want to hear about good news for Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, training is the key to ensuring that we have qualified front-line workers in Health. I won't make predictions about today's budget, but I will say the last time this Premier sat around the Cabinet table, he saw fit to cut the number of training spots for nurses and he slashed the number of medical spaces for doctors. It took a decade in this province to repair the damage.

Manitobans are telling me that all workers are on the front lines of health care—are important to them.

Will the minister commit to keeping the, or increasing, the 110 medical school spaces we currently have in Manitoba?

**Mr. Goertzen:** My friend talks about repair, Madam Speaker. I think he's already forgotten the record of the government, the government that he sat in.

And today he defends the record of being last, last across the country, last in every province, in issues of wait, people waiting in the ER, for hour after hour after hour, and I don't have to name the names of the tragic and—instances that member opposite knows. He defines that as repairing. Well, that's a strange definition of repairing. I don't think it was ever left in more disrepair in the history of Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Madam Speaker, last week this government said they were trying hard to not define what front-line services are. The Minister of Health has refused to directly commit to opening more QuickCare clinics in our province. And now he refuses to commit to training more nurses.

The pattern here is crystal clear: The government is unwilling and unable to commit to protecting front-line services in this province and the people who provide them.

Will the Minister of Health commit to training the same number or more nurse practitioners in this province each year of his mandate?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, Madam Speaker, there is a clear pattern. This member stands up almost daily and asks whether or not we're going to fulfill the commitments and the promises they made during an election campaign. But if you think back to 2011 and all the broken promises that they made, as a government, I don't ever remember the member from Concordia, not once, standing up when he was in the government, when he had access to power, and standing up and saying: Why don't we keep that commitment not to raise the PST? Why don't we keep that commitment not to raise taxes? He never once stood up when he had the chance and asked his government to keep the commitment.

We're going to make commitments in the budget, and we're going to keep them.

### **Dissolution of the East Side Road Authority Employment Loss Concerns**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** On this side of the House, the NDP members have a vision for the North that includes enhanced investments in health

care, education and infrastructure and job opportunities.

Will the Minister of Infrastructure inform the House how many jobs will be cut, and where, by their ill-advised dissolution of the East Side Road Authority?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure):** I thank the member for that question.

And to the—to his question about the East Side Road Authority, it's going to be transitioned into the Infrastructure Department. I realize that the NDP opposes transparency. I realize that this NDP—former NDP government liked to protect their friends and reward them with jobs.

But this PC government is about openness and transparency. We're about eliminating overlap and duplication. It's about building core infrastructure. It's about building relationships, building roads and rebuilding the disrespect that this government had in previous times.

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

#### **Northern Manitoba Communities Community Benefits Agreements**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Highway and bridge projects in the North aren't just assets to families and businesses. They're also the source of well-paying, steady jobs. Northerners have told us time and again the best way to encourage growth in our communities is to invest in infrastructure, and yet the government's Yes! North strategy, touted as a comprehensive economic plan for northern Manitoba, seems to miss the core infrastructure piece completely.

The government seems to only care about beluga whale watching and northern lights tours. It seems like its Yes! North program means no to good jobs.

Will the Minister of Infrastructure commit to the use of community benefit agreements as a vehicle for good-paying employment opportunities and community growth for northerners?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure):** I thank the member for that question.

And I think the member needs to wait. In approximately an hour he'll hear a lot of good news

coming out of this budget from an open and transparent PC government.

But I will agree that good jobs are dependent on good infrastructure, and that is our commitment, to rebuild the infrastructure across all of Manitoba, whether you're in the North, whether you're in the east, whether you're in the south. All across Manitoba infrastructure is important and we will rebuild it.

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

#### **Freedom Road Construction**

**Mr. Lindsey:** The East Side Road Authority provided not only good jobs for northerners, but also had the mandate to build the Freedom Road. This road would dramatically change the way of living for families on Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.

Freedom Road goes far beyond all-season road access. It's about jobs and opportunities. It's about clean drinking water, cheaper transportation costs, better access to social services. It's about a better quality of life.

So what, outside of the Yes! North strategy, is the Minister of Infrastructure's plan to connect Shoal Lake families to these opportunities? Because clearly, the Yes! North program means no to good jobs.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I thank the member for that question.

And I only have to wonder, after 17 years in government, all of a sudden now they have interest in having accessibility for people like as the Shoal Lake bands. Where were they for 17 years when they had the opportunity to do this?

We will partner—we understand the importance of accessibility. We will partner with the City. We will partner with the federal government. We will make these things happen. It's about building trust and respect and doing what you say you will do, unlike the former NDP government.

#### **Federal Seniors Income Supplement Provincial Supplement Reduction Concerns**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Many seniors living in Manitoba are eligible for the provincial 55 Plus supplement program. This program subsidy amount is determined by a sliding scale based on a senior's annual income being less than \$9,746.40, provided that they are not already on income assistance.

Now the federal government is raising the seniors' Guaranteed Income Supplement on July 1st by 10 per cent.

\* (14:10)

Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen): Will he assure this House that the government will not have the provincial supplement reduced in any fashion to those seniors who will be receiving the increased federal GIS?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** On behalf of the Minister of Finance, this government is absolutely committed to tax freedom, tax awareness for all different people. Part of that is things like the basic personal exemption which we think will help put more money in people's pockets. We're absolutely committed to that. We wish the NDP government would have done more work on that.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member of Burrows, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I didn't hear an exact answer there. Is it either yes or no? So, Madam Speaker, I kindly ask the minister for a yes or no response.

Ottawa will be giving our poorest seniors more money.

Will this government guarantee that they will not take money away from our low-income seniors receiving the provincial 55 Plus supplement program, yes or no?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Fielding:** Madam Speaker, and you'll—our budget is being tabled. You're going to have a whole bunch of measures that provide, you know, incentives for people, not just for seniors, but everyone else.

We think we're a party that thinks that more money in people's pocket is extremely important. We're willing to work with the federal government, anyone that's able and looking at different tax purposes for that, so we're—thank you.

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

#### **Low-Income Seniors Elimination of Ambulance Fee**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, I guess I will wait and see the budget.

Madam Speaker, I applaud the government's decision to reduce the ambulance fees for all Manitobans by 50 per cent. I'm looking forward to hearing it become official in the budget later this afternoon.

Cutting ambulance fees in half is a good start. But, Madam Speaker, there is also a real need for government to provide free ambulance services to seniors on lower income.

Will this government act today to implement this?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, I'm glad that my friend from Burrows is excited about hearing the budget in about half an hour. We're all excited in this House about hearing the budget.

And she raises a good point about ambulance fees. For too long we've had Manitobans who've had to decide, when they were in a critical state and a difficult state, whether or not they should drive themselves or have a neighbour drive them or walk to an ER instead of calling an ambulance. We don't believe that Manitobans, whether they're seniors or others, should ever have to put themselves into that position. That is what the NDP left us. We're going to take steps to correct that.

#### **Finance Minister's Tradition Gift to Refugee Family**

**Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere):** Madam Speaker, my colleagues, Manitoba has a long tradition of welcoming refugees and newcomers in our province. And, certainly, in my past career I saw first-hand how welcoming and supportive Manitobans are of newcomers to our community.

In this first budget as Manitoba's new government, rather than following the tradition of new shoes for the Finance Minister, we followed the Manitoba values of generosity and inclusiveness.

Madam Speaker, I am aware the Minister of Education and Training also shares the values of generosity and inclusiveness.

And through you, Madam Speaker, I would like to hear his thoughts on the decision of our Finance Minister to provide new shoes to a refugee family as a symbol of our new government's generosity and inclusiveness.

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member from Rossmere for that question.

Generosity and inclusiveness and compassion are always—have always been values that Manitoba appreciated.

Our province leads the country in newcomer resettlement with nearly 3,000 Syrian newcomers slated to settle in Manitoba before the end of this year.

I am particularly proud of our Finance Minister, who began today with a different tradition: buying a new pair of shoes for a deserving family, demonstrating those values of generosity, inclusiveness.

These values guide our government as we introduce a budget later today, and over the next four years we work to make Manitoba Canada's most improved province.

#### **Manitoba Hydro Development Public Utilities Board Review**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** We know this Premier has great difficulty with transparency and accountability in his own backyard. We know he has difficulty being transparent and accountable even on his own conflict-of-interest forms.

We know that just weeks after this election, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has already broken one of the promises he made to Manitobans.

Can the minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro explain why this government has already broken its promise to have the Public Utilities Board review hydro development in an open and public hearing?

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services):** I'd like to thank the member for the question because it allows our government to put some facts on the record.

First of all, Madam Speaker, one of the first things we did is we made it very clear that there would not be political interference in the Crown corporations. That's how our Crown corporations, in particular, Manitoba Hydro, got into the difficulty that they're in today.

And I'm pleased to say that we have brought in a new structure whereby there will not be political interference from this building or from political operatives into Manitoba Hydro, and we look forward to their recommendations to government,

what they think is best for the ratepayers and for Manitoba Hydro.

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

**Mr. Swan:** Well, we know that most Manitobans already believe that this Premier has a hidden agenda; we actually didn't know it would start showing up quite this quickly.

The Premier promised, clearly and unequivocally, that he would, and I quote, send Bipole III project to the Public Utilities Board for a proper review as part of his first 100 days. I table the text of this promise for the minister, but the minister has declared that this will not happen.

Instead of the PC team's intention to kill one of the most important projects in Manitoba's future having to go to a public and open hearing as these—as they promised, it'll now be determined, in private, by their new hand-picked board.

Why has this minister already broken this promise?

**Mr. Schuler:** I appreciate the question from the member because it allows us to put facts on the record.

First of all, our government has been very clear. There will not be the kind of political interference from operatives within this building to the Crown corporations.

I would also like to point out to members of this Chamber that it hasn't been 100 days, and already we've had a Throne Speech; we are going to have a budget today. This is a government on the move. And, yes, we have been more open and more transparent than anything that came out of the last 17 years of the NDP government.

I would like to say, Madam Speaker, if the members opposite, after having asked the question, would actually answer to the—listen to the answer, that it is something that is before the corporation and, yes—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, it's different visions. New Democrats believe in building clean hydro power for the benefits of all Manitobans, and the PCs believe in putting the brakes on development.

The promise to send the question of hydro development to an open and public hearing before the Public Utilities Board was made by this Premier.

In poker terms, the Premier went all in, but, after the election, he looked at his cards and realized he didn't even have a pair.

Will this minister responsible for Hydro just admit they've broken their promise, because they don't want a public hearing that will show all Manitobans that his Premier's views about hydro development are just plain wrong?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite was part of a government that was in power for 17 years that refused to allow the proposed bipole line, which they politically put forward over the objections of experts at Manitoba Hydro; refused to allow the Public Utilities Board to even review the project; prohibited the Public Utilities Board from looking at the project; directed Manitoba Hydro, in a partisan manner, to move on a project which is not defensible by any expert testimony up to this point in time at the Clean Environment Commission or any commentary from any expert at Hydro; overruled the experts at Manitoba Hydro; refused to allow Manitobans to be protected by a proper hearing before the Public Utilities Board; and now demands a conduct of us, a month in, that they refused to demonstrate for 17 years.

The height of arrogance.

\* (14:20)

#### **Rent Assist Program Implementation Commitment**

**Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas):** We've been hearing from families, Madam Speaker, that are concerned, families that struggle every day. The members opposite provided a Throne Speech, failed to mention the word poverty anywhere in the Throne Speech. They came out with mandate letters that said nothing and no mention how they're going to support low-income Manitobans.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, you know, the Premier stands up, he talks about why people are concerned, he brings it up. The fact is, the reason people are concerned is because this Premier's got a record. He's got a record that is filled with cuts when it comes to supporting the most vulnerable families. In fact, in one budget we saw 56 cuts to organizations all throughout Manitoba.

We know our Rent Assist program is making a difference every day for people on EI and living with disabilities.

I ask the minister responsible for Rent Assist: Will he commit to the full implementation of that program?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** I do appreciate the question from the members opposite.

I can tell you this government is absolutely committed to poverty, and, quite honestly, with the record that we have—*[interjection]* I know the opposition members are howling. They're howling because they know it's true, but they had the worst record in terms of poverty reduction in the whole country.

With us, we want to increase the basic personal exemption we think will put more money in the pockets of the citizens.

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

**Mr. Chief:** There are people like Abbey *[phonetic]* who live in Winnipeg's North End, Madam Speaker. She's a low-income single mother overcoming hardship. She's been making ends meet. The Rent Assist program has helped remove barriers, increased transportation so she can get to the training she needs, providing extra good food for her and her family, increasing community support.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, as we speak today, she's training to become a career counsellor. The Rent Assist program is helping to build stability as low-income Manitobans transition to get that critical first job or a second chance at employment.

I'm going to ask the minister again: Will he stand with Abbey *[phonetic]* and other mothers like Abbey *[phonetic]*, because they're working so hard to transition, and commit to the full implementation of the Rent Assist program?

**Mr. Fielding:** I do appreciate the question from the members opposite.

I can say that this government, when they were in power, raised the PST, which is probably one of the biggest things for low-income families.

This government, while we were in opposition, obviously promoted enhancement of the rent assistance program long before. This was only implemented in the dying days of a dying administration with the NDP.

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

**Mr. Chief:** The fact is that the minister just has to look at his Premier's (Mr. Pallister) record. He's always had a country-club approach to social services for Manitobans. That's a fact. The Premier and his Minister of Education think the best ideas come from New South Wales, which is two hemispheres away from Manitoba.

The fact is the Rent Assist program is having success because mothers and grandmothers and elders and the good folks at Make Poverty History are seeing this driven right from our community. It's making a difference for low-income families every day.

I'm asking the minister today: Will he commit to the full implementation of the Rent Assist program?

**Mr. Fielding:** Again, Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question.

This issue is extremely important to us. This is an issue that we fought for for three years before the NDP government took any action on this at all, so it's obviously an important issue. We think that's obviously an element in terms of the poverty that's there.

When you have the most amount of poverty of anywhere in the country, Madam Speaker, we need to find innovative solutions for it.

#### **Gas Station Arts Centre Project Affordable Housing Component**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** A constituency question today.

I'd like to know about the redevelopment of the Gas Station Arts Centre which is going to be located in Osborne Village in a neighbourhood that's been called one of the best neighbourhoods in Canada. The Osborne Village area needs more affordable housing. That's why the previous NDP government committed to a housing grant for the affordable housing units at the Gas Station Arts Centre.

Would the minister responsible for housing tell us whether the current government will back out of supporting the housing component of this worthy project?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** Madam Speaker, I do appreciate the question from the member.

I can tell you the housing is extremely important. We obviously think affordable housing is—and housing solutions is extremely important to it. We want to listen to stakeholders. We want to listen to anyone has ideas to provide housing solutions.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, Madam Speaker, it appears we're playing question period bingo today, so be sure to mark your card every time you hear stakeholders, consult and important.

But I'd like to tell you once again that the genius of the Gas Station Arts Centre project is that it will bring commercial and residential units, will generate revenue every year for the arts centre, thereby decreasing their reliance on government funding.

So I would like to know from the minister responsible for housing: Why is it that he opposes increasing the financial independence of arts organizations?

**Mr. Fielding:** Madam Speaker, housing is extremely important to people on this side of the House.

We want to work with people of all sides. And the problem, of course, is that the NDP government that was before didn't provide all the solutions. We're open to things.

The member opposite also talked about stakeholders. What I can tell you is consulting stakeholders is extremely important to this government. We're going to do that. They didn't do that when the PST was introduced or other measures like that. We're committed to open dialogue.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, Madam Speaker, it looks like we just hit the full blackout on our bingo card there.

I'd like to say that the resource centre for Manitobans who are deaf and blind have put down payments to secure 10 units as part of this Gas Station Arts Centre.

I'd like to know whether the minister has a plan to ensure the safety and security that is attendant with new housing for members of this community.

**Mr. Fielding:** Madam Speaker, we're absolutely committed to consultation. We'll meet with any groups that are part of this. They want to meet, I'll make time within my schedule. If the member would

like to come and join us at that meeting, that's absolutely okay with me as well.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, as is tradition, I'm going to ask for a brief recess to allow the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) to prepare to deliver the budget speech, and I would ask that the division bells ring for a minute—the bells ring for a minute to summon members back to the House prior to delivery of the speech.

**Madam Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to have a brief recess, followed by one minute of the bells ringing to summon members back to the House? *[Agreed]*

*The House recessed at 2:28 p.m.*

*The House resumed at 2:49 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** The House is now back in session.

### BUDGET ADDRESS

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the First Minister, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand before you today and deliver upon a number of the commitments made by Manitoba's new government; commitments to getting Manitoba back on a responsible fiscal track and to protecting front-line services while eliminating the wasteful government spending that has set our province on a dangerous track.

In our first budget, we are setting a new course for Manitoba; a course that will lead to lower taxes, better services and a stronger economy.

Dans notre premier budget, nous allons fixer un nouveau cap pour le Manitoba, un cap qui mènera à une réduction des impôts et des taxes et des meilleurs services et à une économie plus solide.

#### *Translation*

*In our first budget, we are setting a new course for Manitoba, a course that will lead to lower taxes, better services and a stronger economy.*

#### *English*

We acknowledge that the challenges before us are great. For too long, Manitoba's government has spent beyond its means, resulting in accumulated debt and ever-increasing taxes. These decisions have eroded the confidence and trust of citizens in their government, negatively impacted the incomes of hard-working Manitobans and jeopardized our ability to provide the services that Manitoba families depend on. To ensure the protection of front-line services for all Manitobans now and into the future, we must correct Manitoba's course and we must move our Province back into balance.

Madam Speaker, it cannot be overstated that the challenges that we face as a government and, indeed, as a province are significant. Provincial spending in fiscal year 2015-16 is projected to exceed revenues by over \$1 billion. It is the second time in the past five years that Manitoba has posted a deficit in excess of \$1 billion. It is the largest deficit in our province's history.

The current projection of a \$1.012-billion deficit in 2015-16 is much higher than the \$421-million deficit originally projected when the budget was tabled by the previous government approximately a year ago. That is a difference of \$591 million or 140 per cent. Manitobans expect and deserve more responsible financial management from their government.

Over the past decade, the previous government overspent its planned budget each and every year. The consequences of such a reckless but consistent pattern are alarming and it will create impacts well into the future. In just eight years, the net debt has doubled from \$10 billion to \$21 billion, and while high rates of taxation make it difficult for Manitoba to compete for investments that create jobs and pay for front-line services, the steady growth of our provincial debt makes us vulnerable to increases in interest payments and was a major contributing factor, along with the Province's inability to meet its own targets for returning to balance, in Manitoba's credit rating downgrade; the first downgrade in almost 30 years for our province.

The depletion of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which is Manitoba's savings account, limits our

ability to deal with the consequences of emergencies such as floods or the forest fires that have burned in Manitoba even this spring, and our increased reliance on revenues from the federal government and other provinces makes us vulnerable to reductions in federal transfers. These are serious challenges, Madam Speaker, but Manitobans elected a new government with a strong commitment to charting a better, safer course.

Manitobans have asked our new government to address these challenges with a careful approach based on the principles of trust, compassion and common sense. Sweeping austerity measures will not work given the significant demands of our province's bottom-ranked results when it comes to health care, education and poverty reduction, and would only serve to cause harm to Manitoba's most vulnerable citizens.

Manitoba's new government recognizes the need for a plan to return our Province to fiscal balance, if we are to avoid further downgrades to our Province's credit rating. We will pursue measures that will responsibly restore Manitoba to fiscal balance with a target of achieving balance within our second term, and we know that Manitobans are ready to help us out with their innovative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit that helped build this province and make it great.

Manitoba's health-care systems—the system continues to be plagued by wait times that are among the longest in the country. The number of children under the care of provincial child and family service agencies doubled during the tenure of the previous government and far too many Manitoba children live in poverty. Budget 2016 takes strides to address these key areas of health and child welfare.

Manitoba students have been assessed some of the worst results in national and international testing for basic requirements in literacy, science and math, that is why Budget '16 invests in education and literacy.

Manitoba seniors languished too long on health-care wait lists that are the longest in Canada, and our ambulance fees are the highest in Canada, forcing patients and their families to make difficult decisions in the most trying of circumstances; that is why Budget 2016 invests in personal care homes and reduces ambulance fees for all Manitobans.

Our province's taxation rates have become the highest among provinces west of Ontario including

the highest provincial sales tax rate, the highest general corporate tax rate and a small business corporate tax income limit which is the least competitive among the provinces. High rates of taxation make it difficult for Manitoba to compete for investments to create jobs that help pay for front-line services; low-income earners starting to pay tax here far sooner than in other provinces because Manitoba's basic personal exemption for personal income taxes is among the lowest in Canada. Budget 2016 includes indexing of the basic personal exemption as of January 1st, 2017.

Manitobans should never be forced to choose between receiving the emergency medical attention they need and paying for high ambulance fees. Our government has committed to reducing ambulance fees by half during this mandate, and this budget takes a first important step toward meeting that commitment. Furthermore, we will appoint a wait-times task force that will consult with front-line health-care providers to develop a plan to reduce waits within our health-care system.

We will address our province's shortage of personal-care-home beds by developing a funding model to fast track the construction of those beds in partnership with non-profit organizations, faith-based groups and community leaders in all regions of Manitoba.

Our budget provides a 3.8 per cent increase for funding for health care over the current 2015-16 projection, and this funding will go to support the St. Boniface and Fort Garry ACCESS centres, the Powerview-Pine Falls Primary Care & Traditional Healing Centre, as well as the commissioning of the women's hospital right here in Winnipeg. It will provide needed support for dialysis, improvements to the cardiology critical care unit, the Provincial Oncology Drug Program and the HPV immunization program for males.

Education is an investment in a better future for our children and our province.

L'éducation est un investissement dans un avenir meilleur pour nos enfants et notre province.

***Translation***

*Education is an investment in a better future for our children and our province.*

\* (15:00)

**English**

Education is both our province's path to opportunity and future growth, and one of our greatest challenges given our unacceptably low rates of literacy. That's why this budget provides a 1.4 per cent increase in funding for education and training over the current '15-16 projection, including a 2.55 per cent increase in funding for schools.

We are providing support for new initiatives in early years reading, building upon our children's potential with a focus on improving their ability to read and write, and our government will increase resources to indigenous at-risk students through the Winnipeg School Division's Aboriginal academic achievement program and to adult learning centres, with continued support for the wraparound literacy model 111 Lombard pilot project.

This budget includes new resources in support of three new schools: École Sage Creek School, École South Pointe School and École Rivière Rouge. It also commits to previously announced support for universities and colleges, including operating increases of 2.5 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

Our budget includes a commitment to support the full implementation of the Master of Social Work Indigenous Knowledge program at the University of Manitoba in 2016-17. This program focuses on the development of social workers whose skills are rooted in indigenous knowledge and world views, addressing some of the recommendations made in the Hughes inquiry report.

Our government is providing necessary resources identified by the interprovincial training agreement in clinical genetics technology.

We will build on the success of SkipTheDishes and provide support for year 2 of the Industry and Labour Force Investment Fund training agreement.

We will fulfill our commitment to the Child and Youth Mental Health Strategy, and matching support will be provided for the United Way of Winnipeg family resource centres.

Manitoba's new government will introduce the protecting children act to ease the ability of government departments, child and family service authorities, community service providers and law enforcement agencies to share information and collaborate when dealing with victimized and at-risk children.

This budget provides a 6.2 per cent increase in funding for the Department of Families over the current 2015-16 projection. It significantly increases our contribution to new construction, improvement and 'maintenant' costs through the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation's multi-year capital program.

And to assist those in need, this budget provides for full indexation to 75 per cent of median market rent through the Rent Assist program to help low-income Manitobans who live in private rental housing.

Our government will increase supports for residential care direct service workers through the Community Living disABILITY Services, and we will support Child and Family Services programs with FASD connections, COACH expansion, StreetReach expansion, the Families First Point Douglas pilot project, and Resource Assistance for Youth through the safe sweets pilot project.

Within Children's disABILITY Services, we are continuing government support to reduce wait-lists for the Children's Therapy Initiative, family support services and Specialized Services for Children and Youth.

We will engage in consultations with interested partners from business and the community with the goal of increasing social supports through innovative social impact bonds. These discussions will begin the process of fostering new business, social and community partnerships.

This budget provides support for early learning and child care, including operating grants for existing child-care centres, as well as principal and interest costs for new centres.

And it provides increased resources to support services for victims of crime, the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, as well as the New Home Warranty and high-cost credit grantors programs that will take effect this year.

This budget supports the family resource centres sponsored by the United Way of Winnipeg, subject to matching funding being raised by the United Way, and it continues the government's general support of the United Way of Manitoba to ensure that donations are directed to the community and not to fundraising or administrative costs.

A stronger economy is the best pathway to better services for Manitobans.

Une économie plus forte est la meilleure voie pour obtenir de meilleurs services pour la population manitobaine.

**Translation**

*A stronger economy is the best pathway to better services for Manitobans.*

**English**

We are pleased to enter into discussions with our western neighbours toward membership in the New West Partnership Trade Agreement.

And we look forward to new opportunities to market our province and to co-operate on the provision of services.

Manitoba's tourism potential is limitless, but our investment in this sector has lagged behind that offered by governments elsewhere in Canada. Our private sector partners have called for more investment in tourism promotion, and we believe that tourism-related economic benefits will justify increases both in this year's budget and into the future.

This budget provides for the necessary preparations as we approach the beginning of the 2017 Canada Summer Games here in Winnipeg. These games will be an incredible opportunity to showcase our province to the entire country. We committed to spending at least \$1 billion on strategic infrastructure for 2016-17: funding for roads and bridges, flood protection, hospitals, schools, universities and colleges as well as municipal infrastructure. In fact, the level of investment in Budget 2016 is over \$1.8 billion.

Projects that are not yet approved will be reviewed to assess their return on investment, social and economic benefits. Priority will be placed on projects that leverage additional investment from the public sector, private sector and other levels of government.

Budget 2016 lays the foundation for an improved partnership with the City of Winnipeg and all Manitoba municipalities by providing the Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations the tools necessary to create a single provincial access point for municipal programming. Such an approach complements our commitment to provide municipalities with a fair say on infrastructure projects affecting their jurisdiction.

We will appoint members of the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) Enterprise Team, creating an advisory panel of top business leaders who will work with our government to create new jobs and economic growth in the province. And we will commence discussions with indigenous leaders on the best path forward to a respectful and collaborative consultation process.

We will soon establish a red tape reduction task force to eliminate the needless impediments that frustrate business owners and individual citizens. And we will provide increased resources to rural opportunities for growth, partner for growth to create jobs in partnership with our municipalities. This support is directed to assessing the feasibility of economic opportunities and to supporting community-initiated projects that pursue strategic economic opportunities.

This budget includes significant additional resources to provide supports for Syrian refugees as they settle into their new community. These will include staff supports at Welcome Place, a community sponsorship coordinator, language and literacy training services and services provided by Mount Carmel Clinic. These funds will increase the service capacity necessary for greater levels of refugee resettlement in Manitoba, including approximately 2,500 Syrian refugees.

This support will include private refugee sponsorship efforts; educational, social, cultural and mental health supports for refugee youth; and refugee housing.

Work is also under way to develop a made-in-Manitoba climate action plan, one that will include a carbon pricing model that fosters emissions reductions, retains capital investment and stimulates new innovation in clean energy, businesses and jobs.

\*(15:10)

Exactly 12 weeks ago, on March the 8th, the previous government presented a projected deficit of \$554 million for budget year 2016-17. The previous government inflated revenue and understated their expenditures, including \$215 million in savings that were never identified, and 316 in federal revenues, most of which never materialized. The previous government should have stated that projected deficit as \$1.085 billion.

Since our government was sworn in just four weeks ago, we have worked diligently to change the trajectory of overspending so long pursued by the previous government, and, in Budget 2016,

Manitoba's new government will reduce our province's core deficit by \$122 million to a new sum of \$890 million; that's a 12 per cent improvement over the 2015-16 [*inaudible*]

And this budget will not draw from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, a fund that was created to address exceptional circumstances, not the ongoing failure of government to responsibly manage Manitoba's finances.

This budget freezes taxes, Madam Speaker, and gives Manitobans a permanent tax break that will keep up with the cost of living by ending bracket creep and indexing our income tax brackets to the rate of inflation.

Madam Speaker, our government is indexing the basic personal exemption, bringing it closer toward the national average, and removing 2,770 low-income Manitobans from the tax rolls on January the 1st, 2017.

This budget protects education tax relief for Manitoba seniors by maintaining the Seniors' School Tax Rebate at its current level of \$470, and it introduces an income test based on net family income to ensure that the benefit is provided to those seniors who need it most.

In order to reduce application paperwork and administrative costs, the Seniors' School Tax Rebate will be integrated with the existing \$400 seniors' Education Property Tax Credit, which is already income tested and delivered through annual income tax returns.

We are leading by example in our determination to do more with less. As such, this budget reflects a reduction in the size of Cabinet by one third, resulting in a savings of \$4 million per year.

And this budget also takes initial steps to reduce unnecessary administrative costs. The East Side Road Authority will be dissolved, and its mandate will be repatriated into Manitoba's Department of Infrastructure.

Property tax credits and rebates to seniors will now be delivered through the income tax system, administered by the Canada Revenue Agency, resulting in an estimated \$900,000 of savings each and every year.

We will eliminate the per-vote allowance for political parties, known as the vote tax, in recognition of the fact that political parties do not require additional supports from Manitoba taxpayers.

And we will reduce the amount of advertising that promotes government, choosing to invest instead in the promotion of Manitoba as a national and international tourist destination.

To find further savings, Madam Speaker, we have launched a value-for-money review. This review will look within government for savings. It will engage Manitobans to share their innovative ideas for eliminating waste, while protecting front-line services.

We are also committed to a review of government tendering practices to shop smarter, reduce untendered contracts and eliminate the practice of forced unionization.

Consistent with our commitment to an open government initiative, this budget provides resources for the legislative review of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. And we will soon introduce legislation to begin the implementation of other elements of our open government commitment, and we will ensure that Manitobans are always allowed to vote on major tax increases.

Our goal is to make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada. Manitoba's new government is committed to the development of a system of measurements to report on our progress toward our stated goals. A strong fiscal plan is the foundation for a healthy economy and a healthy province, one with the ability to grow, to face difficult circumstances and to provide for the needs of its population.

Il est essentiel d'avoir un plan financier solide pour assurer la bonne santé de notre économie et de notre province, une province avec une bonne capacité de croissance et qui peut faire face aux situations difficiles et subvenir aux besoins de sa population.

#### ***Translation***

*A strong fiscal plan is the foundation for a healthy economy and a healthy province, one with the ability to grow, to face difficult circumstances and to provide for the needs of its population.*

#### ***English***

It will take time to correct the course. It will take years of hard work guided by compassion and common sense. Manitobans are not afraid of hard work, however, and neither is their new government.

We will work together with all Manitobans to build a better, stronger, more prosperous Manitoba.

That process begins today with the measures outlined in this budget. Responsible steps will enable us to put Manitoba back on track so that we are able to protect the front-line services used by all Manitobans today and needed in the future.

We share the confidence that the only thing better than today in Manitoba is tomorrow in Manitoba.

We all know that Manitoba is a wonderful place to live, to love, to laugh, to learn and to leave a legacy. Indeed, Madam Speaker, while the challenges we face are large, our government is confident that Manitobans will band together as we have done in other times of trouble and to face those challenges head-on and to leave our province much improved.

Our goal, the duty we each share, is to replace doubt with harmony—or with optimism, disharmony with unity, to replace fear and anxiety with hope and opportunity for all Manitobans and to ensure that truly, our best days are ahead of us.

Thank you.

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Elmwood, that the debate be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

## Messages

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I have two messages from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as well as the budget documents, including the statement summarizing the poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy, which I would like to table.

\* (15:20)

**Madam Speaker:** Please stand for the reading of the messages.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2017, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the province for capital expenditures and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé), that this House do now adjourn.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Madam Speaker:** The House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

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