

Second 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*

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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	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, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
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
<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs

Third Report

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 3, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Bill (No. 13) – The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les professions de la santé réglementées*
- *Bill (No. 14) – The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les interventions médicales d'urgence et le transport pour personnes sur civière*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Mr. FLETCHER*
- *Hon. Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Mrs. GUILLEMARD (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. LAGIMODIERE*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. NESBITT*
- *Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)*
- *Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park)*
- *Hon. Ms. SQUIRES*
- *Mr. WIEBE*

- *Mr. WHARTON*

Your Committee elected Mr. WHARTON as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on Bill (No. 13) – The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les professions de la santé réglementées:

Gigi Osler, Dr. and Matt Maruca (by leave), Doctors Manitoba

Anna Ziomek, Dr. and Catherine Tolton (by leave), College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba

George Fraser, Remedial Massage Therapists Society of Manitoba Inc.

Bills Considered and Reported

- *Bill (No. 13) – The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les professions de la santé réglementées*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- *Bill (No. 14) – The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les interventions médicales d'urgence et le transport pour personnes sur civière*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mrs. Guillemard: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Mayer), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development

Second Report

Mr. Dennis Smook (Chairperson): I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 3, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Securities Amendment Act (Reciprocal Enforcement)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières (exécution réciproque)*
- **Bill (No. 3)** – *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Manitoba) Act/Loi du Manitoba sur les régimes de pension agréés collectifs*

Committee Membership

- Mr. ALLUM
- Hon. Mr. FRIESEN
- Mr. JOHNSON
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Mrs. MAYER (Vice-Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER
- Ms. KLASSEN
- Mr. SMOOK (Chairperson)
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Hon. Mr. WISHART
- Mr. SWAN

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Securities Amendment Act (Reciprocal Enforcement)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières (exécution réciproque)*:*

*Gary Senft, Great West Life Assurance Company
Donald MacDonald, Investors Group Inc.*

*Your Committee heard the following five presentations on **Bill (No. 3)** – *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Manitoba) Act/Loi du Manitoba sur les régimes de pension agréés collectifs*:*

Ron Sanderson, Canadian Life & Health Insurance Association

Stefanie Keller, Financial Planning Standards Council

Jonathan Alward, Canadian Federation of Independent Business

*Gary Senft, Great West Life Assurance Company
Donald MacDonald, Investors Group Inc.*

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 2)** – *The Securities Amendment Act (Reciprocal Enforcement)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières (exécution réciproque)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 3)** – *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Manitoba) Act/Loi du Manitoba sur les régimes de pension agréés collectifs*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Smook: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Infrastructure, and the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Spring Flood Update

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I would like to provide an update on the spring flood conditions in the province.

Temperatures across southern Manitoba have been above average, but cooler temperatures overnight will begin tomorrow evening and are expected to slow the rate of melt.

Flood conditions this spring have proved challenging in many parts of Manitoba, with overland flooding and ice jamming resulting in damage to some homes, farms and communities. As the water begins to fall in some streams, still other streams are on the rise, and I'm confident that Manitobans will continue to join together to meet the challenges and keep our homes and communities safe.

Approximately 250 staff from Manitoba Infrastructure are involved in this year's flood response from the front lines, working side-by-side with municipalities to steam culverts, break ice jams, build or deploy flood protection measures. Many others are assisting municipalities and First Nations with emergency management, ensuring the safety of

our highways, bridges and water infrastructure, forecasting flood conditions, and operating water control structures and providing information to stakeholders and the public.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of our team in EMO and MI, our municipal partners, the countless volunteers and the Canadian Red Cross, as everyone works to keep Manitobans safe and dry.

I want to remind Manitobans to be watchful of local waterways, as flood conditions can develop quickly. Avoid driving through moving water, as the water depth can be unpredictable and currents can push vehicles off the road. Ditches and culverts contain fast-moving water which can be hazardous and should be avoided.

We will continue to respond to issues as they arise and work with our partners across the province to ensure the safety of all Manitobans.

And, again, it's a reminder to stay informed during the flood. Up-to-date information is available at our website, which is gov.mb.ca/flooding/

On Twitter at twitter.com/MBGov

And our highway conditions report are always available at manitoba511.ca, or you can call 511.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): As floodwaters continue to rise throughout the province, the number of—in the Manitoba communities who have declared a state of emergency has risen from eight to 10. Nearly 200 people from four First Nations communities have been evacuated from their homes. There's some of the—these are some of the highest numbers of flood evacuees in—the province has seen in years.

Manitobans have always risen to the challenge in the face of flooding. Throughout the province, volunteers are rallying to help mitigate the damaging—damages of floods and help families who have been forced from their homes. Whether it be helping their neighbours sandbag or opening up their homes to flood evacuees, Manitobans are working tirelessly to prevent further damage. In Carman, hundreds of volunteers came together and filled over 15,000 sandbags over the weekend and crews across Manitoba have been working throughout the night to clear ice jams.

Severe flooding is impacting Manitoba communities more and more frequently, and we know that the time to invest in flood protection infrastructure is now. On behalf of the NDP caucus, I would encourage all Manitobans to lend a helping hand if they can.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: I'd like to thank the minister for his update.

I also want to recognize all those who are working very hard in different parts of the province to address the flooding conditions that we're experiencing.

I think particular attention needs to be addressed in terms of Peguis, where there's been so many people evacuated, and I'm pleased that the minister and his government yesterday said that they were going to pay attention and implement some long-run measures to prevent flooding in Peguis in the future.

I'm sure there will be some federal-provincial co-operation needed for that and we're certainly ready to work with the government to try to achieve that, but I would also add that I note that there's a lot of infrastructure money for this year which hasn't been spent, so there may be an opportunity there in terms of federal-provincial sharing.

Madam Speaker, we hope that the situation doesn't get any worse, but we know it's very important that everyone is paying attention and we're keeping a close eye out on the situation. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Sharon Wachal

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): I rise today to give thanks to a tremendous volunteer, advocate and a friend from St. Vital, Sharon Wachal.

Sharon has been involved with Teen Stop Jeunesse since 2010 and, without a doubt, it is her tenacity, hard work and passion that has made the centre such a success.

Teen Stop Jeunesse is a local drop-in centre in St. Vital that provides a safe and fun place for youth ages eight to 18 to go. The centre creates a positive home-away-from-home environment for our youth to

participate in programming centered around personal growth, to enjoy before- and after-school activities or simply to be a place where they can be heard.

One of the programs offered at the centre is the nutritional program, which is an opportunity for participants to learn the importance of healthy living, how to prepare meals and, Madam Speaker, in many cases, eat the only meal that they will have that day.

Last year, when the required funds for the program were not available, instead of giving up, Sharon rose to the challenge before her and exceeded all expectations. She brought together local groups and together they held a fundraiser event that raised what was necessary to keep the program alive.

* (13:40)

I was fortunate enough to attend the Texas-style Jamboree in the fall of last year and act as the mayor of the town. My official mayoral duties were to collect the bail money for those who were put in jail. It was a fun evening for all those who attended and I look forward to being Colleen "Mayor" again this year.

Madam Speaker, as we all know, volunteers like Sharon are the reason why our why our communities continue to move forward, thrive and be the place that we all can be proud to call home. Being given the opportunity to recognize just how vital volunteers are is one of the reasons why I enjoy my role as an MLA so much.

Madam Speaker, I would ask Sharon, who is joining us today in the gallery, to stand as we honour her and all her efforts from past years and the many more to come.

Climate Change

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I rise today on behalf of my many constituents who are exceptionally concerned at the complete lack of action by this government on the crucial issue of climate change.

Madam Speaker, 2016 was the warmest year on record. It beat 2015, which before 2016 was the warmest year on record; 2014 before that was the warmest year on record. And yet the first action by this government when they came to office was for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his minister to both deny that human activity is a primary source of the climate change that our planet is experiencing.

To perhaps cover up from that gaffe, they promised action in their first Throne Speech that was followed by a budget speech which didn't even mention the word environment—never mind the words climate change. Following that we had more promises of action in the second Throne Speech from this government, but, now, after 11 months they decided they were going to consult with Manitobans, and we should not be surprised that the Premier is now one of only two who is refusing to sign on to the federal framework agreement on this crucial issue.

Meanwhile, at our recent NDP–Manitoba NDP convention, I'm very proud that the following resolution was passed. It was entitled Keep it in the Ground, and it says, I quote: The Manitoba NDP will oppose the expansion and development of any new pipelines to transport tar sands oil through Manitoba and commit itself to the promotion of a low-carbon, carbon-free energy sources such as geothermal, wind, solar and hydro that creates sustainable, high-quality jobs for Manitobans. This is the vision that we should be following.

I call, on behalf of the residents of Wolseley, for this government to follow our fine lead.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Brandon District United Way

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I stand in the House today to both congratulate and to provide awareness for the Brandon district United Way. Originally known as the community chest of war bonds appeal when it was established in Brandon in 1937, this community group will be celebrating its 80th anniversary later this month.

Madam Speaker, I was honoured to be chairman of this organization a number of years ago and credit the success of their efforts in inspiring individuals to make a lasting difference in their communities to the late Debbie Arsenault, the former CEO. When people come together and share their knowledge, their experience, talents and resources, they can all make positive changes happen that never could've been done by working on our own. We know that when you invest in your community through United Way, you're joining thousands of others in supporting strategies, partnerships and programs that are changing lives and creating opportunities for the better.

Being the first United Way to be established in Manitoba, United Way of Brandon & District

continues to improve the lives and builds the community by engaging individuals in mobilizing collective action. The three key priorities, All That Kids Can Be, From Poverty to Possibility and Building Strong Communities remain the key focus of the current CEO, Cynamon Mychasiw and the director of operations, Janice Evens. In addition, the assistance and guidance of Campaign Director Areta Donnelly and Campaign Assistant Katherine Klemick, their annual fundraising campaign raises thousands of dollars to stay in the area.

Madam Speaker, the people of Brandon and surrounding area have the opportunity to celebrate the work of the United Way of Brandon & District by attending the 80th Anniversary Launch Party scheduled for April the 20th, 2017. I would like to invite all members of this House to join me in Brandon that evening to celebrate the success of Manitoba's first United Way.

I close today by thanking the volunteer board of directors of the Brandon United Way and for all that they do and for the surrounding communities, and I ask for leave to include the names of the board in Hansard.

Thank you very much.

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

Terry Carlisle, board chair; Scott Preston, board vice-chair; Patti Bell; Katie Bonk; Kirk Carr; Troy Dennis; Karla Dane; Samantha Falloon; Marlene Heise; Frank Iwasiuk; Krystal Kayne; Jason Krieser; Jenna MacDonald; Sarah Peto; Derek Radics; Sherri Swaney.

Preserving Our Language and History

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I had the honour of attending a special event entitled Preserving Our Language and History gathering in St. Theresa this past week. It was a gathering of community members and all categories of membership were present.

We have been trying to preserve our language and our history for many decades, but we never had the resources, support, nor the approval of our paternalistic governments.

I'd like to thank MFNERC for sponsoring the gathering and the facilitators, Stephanie, Gwen and Karen equally, and thanks to all the helpers of the event.

There were heartfelt speeches given by many band members. We had our Catholics as well as our traditional people present who gave respectful, learned speeches. There was a definite air of collaboration in the goal of documenting our collective knowledge. There was such a positive energy flowing. There was collaboration because at the heart of it was the fact that this would be for our beautiful children and for our future generations to come. There were several elders present who fondly talked about the history of our reserve. You could really see the pride when they regaled us their stories of the knowledge that they had retained.

I learned that in our area we had very little contact with outsiders until the late 1800s. It was in 1906 the first Catholic Father came, but they did not establish their church until 1925. This was also the year the first children left for residential school.

I always knew that the Island Lakers came from one group initially, but I never knew the year. I now know it was 1928.

There is still so much work to be done, but when you love what you're embarking upon, it does not feel like work. This is the first step in ensuring our children and those yet unborn will learn our true Island Lake history.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Environmental Sustainability Award Recipients

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to tell the House that a family from my constituency has been awarded the Environmental Sustainability Award from the Manitoba Beef Producers.

Gene and Cynthia Nerbas, along with their sons Arran, and his wife Amber, and Shane, and his wife Sacha, operate Nerbas Brothers Angus in Shellmouth. The family completed the Environmental Farm Plan program that made them eligible to be nominated for the award. It was presented to them at the recent annual meeting of the Manitoba Beef Producers.

Their all-Black-Angus herd consists of 100 pure-bred and 500 commercial cows. Their focus has been to produce cattle that can thrive in a forage-based environment, working with nature to let the land and animals do what they do best: produce beef from grass.

Nerbas Brothers have been operating under holistic management principles for the past 12 years,

meaning they don't use synthetic fertilizers or pesticides on their grasslands, but rely on the nutrients cycling through the animal and intensive grazing to maximize their grass production. They practice methods such as rotational and bale grazing, off-site watering systems, seeding of extra pasture and extended grazing.

I would like to commend the Nerbas family for their extensive efforts in environmental stewardship through drought and flood mitigation, all while contributing to greater soil health for greater plant diversity.

I ask all honourable members to join with me in wishing the Nerbas family luck as they compete for the National Environmental Sustainability Award from the Canadian Cattlemen's Association this August at the CCA semi-annual meeting in Calgary, Alberta.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care Funding Provincial Negotiations

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Manitobans count on the negotiating skills of the Premier to protect their interests. The relationship between the Premier and the federal government is a critical one. Unfortunately, our Premier seems to find himself fighting with Ottawa with troubling regularity. Canadians outside of Manitoba might be excused for only knowing two things about our Premier: that he always seems to be fighting with the Prime Minister; and that he spends a lot of time outside of Manitoba.

Now that the Premier is back, will he commit to stopping the bickering with Ottawa and get a health-care deal for Manitobans?

* (13:50)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, we love fighting for Manitoba on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, and, of course, we know what the members opposite did when they had the opportunity to stand up for Manitobans in the discussions that we've had around health care. They decided to sit on their hands and do nothing, and that's what the record will prove they did. They did nothing.

Madam Speaker, we've seen a commitment on the part of the federal government which we have partnered with on many different issues very successfully, to add a considerable investment to indigenous health care, and that's something that

we raised as a first priority, raised with the premiers across the country and something we raised successfully as a priority with the federal government. And we compliment and applaud them for the rightful and long-delayed additional contributions to First Nations health care in this country, and we're proud of our role in achieving that goal.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier likes to portray himself as a shrewd negotiator, but it seems he can't close the deal on this health-care agreement. In fact, we saw the Premier's deal-making skills in action yesterday, when he gave up on his demand that the Prime Minister make his commitments in writing. This kind of flip-flopping doesn't bode well for his ability to protect the health care of Manitobans and stand up for our interests.

Front-line workers want to take the Premier at his word, but we'd like to get his commitment to protect front-line services in writing: Or should we assume that even that will be written in disappearing ink?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I appreciate any question about commitments from the member opposite. I tell her and I tell all Manitobans that we are strongly committed to changing the course for the future of our province and putting it in a positive direction on a road to recovery

And, Madam Speaker, we were headed in the wrong way, and the previous administration steered us in the wrong direction. We were headed to a \$1.7-billion deficit in the next four years if the NDP would have stayed in power. And that's a dangerous road to go because that threatens front-line services and the people who provide them more than anything else that they could scare up or conjure up. All they have to do to frighten front-line workers is talk about their record over 17 years in government.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier has some his—some of his figures wrong, awfully wrong.

We hope the Premier has learned something from this fight with the federal government. We can all hope that the next time he's negotiating with the federal government that he has a better idea of what

works. But I think we should all be concerned that the Premier doesn't get it.

Esteemed political science professor Paul Thomas noted that the Premier is seen as highly competitive, combative and stubborn and that he's prone to blow up when things don't go his way.

Can the Premier ensure that these tendencies don't get in the way of what's best for Manitobans, or will his failure to get a health-care deal done be his excuse for an agenda for privatization?

Mr. Pallister: I really appreciate any question from the NDP on getting figures wrong, Madam Speaker, because they're expert at it, and I like it when they ask questions about things they know something about, and they know something about getting figures wrong.

They predicted that the deficit in the year before the last election would be less than half of what it ended up being. Madam Speaker, that's a hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars-getting-it-wrong thing.

And, Madam Speaker, they knew that if they—if we were forced to keep a fraction of the promises that they made in desperation—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —in the dying days of a dying regime, Madam Speaker, that we would push the credit rating down further and that would force Manitobans to pay tens of millions more dollars to happy moneylenders somewhere else in the country so that those promises could be kept.

Madam Speaker, \$1.7 billion is the deficit that we would have inherited from the NDP in the next election. And that would be without assuming that a single one of their desperate promises was kept or paid for. That's a horrible record, and we're going to get it right where they failed to get it right.

Health-Care Services Privatization Concerns

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, after promising Manitobans specifically that they wouldn't cut front-line services, this government in its first year in the job has shuttered QuickCare clinics, cancelled home-care services and mothballed personal-care-home projects, all this while playing games with Ottawa for purely political purposes with nothing to show for it.

Well, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said yesterday he wouldn't shy away from telling Manitobans about

the next cuts that he's planning and he talked openly about how more private health care is what Manitobans want.

Will the Premier stand up today and admit that his cuts in health care have directly led to a system of two-tier health care in Manitoba?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, that is nearly the first thing I've ever heard the member utter about negotiations with Ottawa. He said nothing—nothing when we were trying to get a long-term fair deal. In fact, all provinces were doing the same thing. Every provincial health minister, whether they're New Democrats or Liberals across the country, all said that what the Liberals were doing in terms of the health-care so-called negotiations was going to be bad for Canadians in the long run, and that member said nothing. He was late to the game in terms of trying to actually fight for Manitobans.

Our Premier, our caucus, our government fought for Manitoba; we will continue to fight for Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, even if the Premier won't come clean, everyone else can see what's coming: more privatization.

Nathan Hiebert, from the company Timely Care, told the Winnipeg Sun yesterday that he really sees a bright future for his company because, in his words, the Premier and his Health Minister are going to, quote, shred a lot of the health-care costs out of the system to balance their books, end quote.

Well, costs like the hospital home-care team, the QuickCare clinics, ACCESS centres, emergency rooms. He went on to say, quote: You're always going to get controversy when you privatize health care. Well, on that point, Madam Speaker, I certainly agree.

Will this minister own up to the fact that his cuts in front-line health services combined with his refusal to enforce the Canada Health Act—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, we saw the formula for health care from the former NDP government. First, they broke the system and after breaking the system they poured billions of dollars into that broken system and, as a result of that, they were last

in categories—almost any category that was measurable in the health-care system. That is their formula, and they did it every year: broke the system, poured millions of dollars into it, became dead last. That was their formula for success. It didn't work. We're going to get it right, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, a private health-care provider, he knows what the government—that the government is slashing funding and, in fact, he's banking on that. He's going to cash in on the demands that the Province is not willing to meet.

Now, I appreciate that Mr. Hiebert is looking for brisk business, but what Manitobans actually want is primary health-care services on the basis of their need, not on their ability to pay.

This minister has so far only suggested cuts rather than solutions. Not enough nurse practitioners at a clinic? Close the clinic. An unprecedented need for personal-care-home beds? Cancel projects.

Here's a real solution, Madam Speaker, to the challenges facing our health-care system: let's get rid of this health-care minister. I don't see how it could be any worse. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I serve at the pleasure of our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and with the permission of my wife, and when I lose the confidence of either of those I will certainly go on and do other things.

* (14:00)

But, in the meantime, we are focused on looking at the past 17 years of this government where they poured billions of dollars into the health-care system, didn't get results for Manitobans, were last in categories right across the board, and all the member has to offer for suggestions is let's do the same thing, let's go back to the future and do 17 years of spending money and getting no results.

We're not going to do that, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Health-Care Services Privatization Concerns

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): The advent of Timely Care has proven to be quite timely with a budget coming up next week. The president yesterday was quoted as saying, and I quote: The government is planning to shred a lot of the health-care costs out of the system to balance their books.

Now, as usual, it sounds like a Tory insider has more information than people in this House or even the people of Manitoba.

So I want to ask the Finance Minister today: Just what health services is he intending to shred in next week's budget?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, once again, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview is on one of his rants. He has little left besides fear.

What we have is hope. We have the hard work that we have done in the preparation of the budget that we will bring on April 11th. We have behind us the most considerable prebudget exercise in listening to Manitobans ever undertaken in this province.

We continue to listen. The difference between their approach and ours: we will get results; we will hit our targets; we will deliver for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, as the Finance Minister says, he's going to hit targets; he didn't put any targets in the budget last year. We're hoping to see a few, just a few, this year.

But, you know, back in 1996, when this government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —when these guys were previously in power, the Health Minister said, you know, we don't have a choice. We're going to have to just freeze health-care spending in this province.

But, you know, they do have a choice. They made a choice already to cut services. They cut the—a state-of-the-art health-care facility. They're cutting QuickCare clinics. They won't even install the MRI in Dauphin.

So I want to ask the Finance Minister today: Will he respect the Canada Health Act, not privatize

any more services and keep it out of the shredder once and for all?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for Fort Garry-Riverview for that question about our commitment to hit targets.

I note that in '14-15 fiscal year, the NDP set a target in their budget of a deficit of \$324 million. In actuality, it ended up at \$635 million.

Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —the average of the last eight years of expenditures compared to revenues clearly shows that, if left unchecked, on the same course, the NDP deficit by the year '19-20 would have been \$1.7 billion, unsustainable, unsupportable, a path of taxes and the same failing services.

We choose a different path for all Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Allum: We'd have more confidence in the Finance Minister if he knew what century we were in.

The government's willingness to allow creeping privatization into our health-care system—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —is a concern to every single Manitoban.

And, yet, yesterday we have a privatized health-care provider—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —saying that the government is going to shred a lot of health-care costs.

So I want the Finance Minister to do the right thing today, just for once, just one time, and assure the people of Manitoba that he's going to respect the Canada health-care act and he's not going to privatize any more health services in this province.

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for that question, again, about the willingness of this government to hit its targets.

I note that in the fiscal year '15-16—for the member, of course, that means 2015-2016; the fiscal

years are not the same as the annual years—I note that the budget indicated \$441 million as a deficit target. In actuality, \$865 million: a swing and a miss.

Madam Speaker, the natural trajectory of that overspending year over year was a \$1.7-billion deficit by the year '19-20. That is the facts.

We expect more; Manitobans expect more. We will deliver more for Manitobans.

Tuition Rebate and Tax Credit Government Intention

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): For one Fort Rouge constituent I spoke to recently and her partner, the tuition fee income tax rebate and the education tax credits were important. They meant that she could pay off her student loans within a few years. It also helped her to decide to return to Manitoba after grad school and helped her partner save up to buy a house.

So I'd like to know if this government plans to continue these programs. Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) commit today to keeping the tuition rebate and education tax credits in place?

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

That member and all the members of this House know that it is no secret that in Manitoba we have a vast array of tax credits, some that are hangers-on from years long ago.

What we have indicated as a Province and as a new government is that there needs to be coherence in our tax credit system. There needs to be goals. There needs to be results, and we are making sure in the comprehensive review of tax credits that we will get results for all Manitobans and that the strategies will align and that there will be coherence in these tax credits going forward.

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

Mr. Kinew: Of course, the result of the tax credits that I'm speaking of is to put money back in to the pockets of students who stay here in Manitoba, make their careers and make their lives here.

And we know that affordable tuition is a big deal for students in Manitoba, especially if the Premier makes good on his plan to hike tuition rates for these students. One way that they can offset that is by keeping these tax credits in place so that students can get some of their tuition back at tax time.

So, I'd like to ask again: Will this Premier commit to keeping the tuition rebate and education tax credits in place here in Manitoba?

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

When we were conducting our very significant prebudget consultative exercise, we heard from students in all corners of the province saying help us re-profile and put the emphasis on getting access to post-secondary institutions.

The member is incorrect when he says that the tax credit of which he speaks is to put money into the pockets of students. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: It shows a misunderstanding of that tax credit. It is not for students. The tax credit of which he speaks is for graduates, people in their professions claiming on past years when they used to be a student. So that's not the same as what he describes.

We need more support for students going in to school, that's the results that we will deliver on behalf of all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Once again, Madam Speaker, I didn't hear any direct commitment from the Finance Minister to keep these two tax credits in place to help Manitoba students, who then go on to become Manitoba graduates, as we all know in the House here.

So I am concerned that the government may be withdrawing \$67 million in supports for students in these—form of these tax credits without bringing anything else back to the table to help students with affordability and, you know, the rising cost of tuition.

So can the Premier commit to the House today that if he is to withdraw \$67 million in support for students in the form of tax credits, that he will give back \$67 million to Manitoba students in supports to help them pay their tuitions and student debt?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The previous administration took \$300 million out of the pockets of Manitobans when they raised the PST and before that close to a quarter of a billion dollars by broadening the PST.

* (14:10)

They impacted young people across the province in a significant way by raising the cost for them to get to school, if they drive a car, or to buy gas if they needed to fuel the car, also to pay for accommodations because they raised the PST to put it on the cost of insuring the place where the student might want to stay, and in numerous other ways, hundreds of ways, in fact, they put a greater burden in front of young people to get to post-secondary.

What we want to do is make sure that that door is opened, in particular for young Manitobans who have a challenging financial circumstance, and that's where the resources need to be invested: to keep those doors open for young people who are challenged financially. And that's what we're going to focus on, Madam Speaker. Where the previous administration failed, we will succeed.

Refugee Claimants Government Funding Plan

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, in early February, when asked if the Province would provide support for refugees, the Premier replied: Yes, absolutely. So he offered 14 beds and a small amount of dollars, which really is just a drop in the bucket to what is actually required by Manitoba refugee organizations.

Two months later the Premier says he needs to pull back on support and has passed the buck off to the federal government. It's a story that we've seen time and time again from the Premier. He's pushed health funding onto the feds, access to reproductive health care, nearly half a billion dollars in infrastructure, and now supports for refugees.

Will the Premier stop shifting his responsibilities and support refugees?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I am not surprised, though I am somewhat disappointed that the NDP has decided to take the side of the federal government that they need to stand back and do nothing rather than support our province and its people and the agencies that are working diligently on overtime to accommodate this tremendous influx of asylum seekers to our province.

I am not—as I said, Madam Speaker, I'm disappointed, though not surprised. The reality is that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —we are doubling our budget for this, the supports that we need to offer. Manitoba is the

home of hope throughout its history, and we want to continue to offer hope to asylum seekers and refugees from around the world and we are dedicated to that purpose.

But, Madam Speaker, it does serve no good for the members opposite to make this a political point of support for their friends at the federal governmental level, when, in fact, it is their responsibility to protect our border and they are ineffective at doing so, obviously, and we are forced to pick up the slack here in Manitoba.

Manitobans are ready to do more than their share. We are doing more than our share, and I'd encourage the members opposite to encourage all Canadians to join in the challenge. This is a team-Canada mission, not just a team-Manitoba responsibility.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Premier promised to bring in 300 government-assisted refugees from abroad this year, but less than four months into a new year he's reneged on his promise and pushed the responsibility onto the federal government.

Instead of following through on his promise to support refugees, the Premier is using refugees as a leverage in his health care fight. Madam Speaker, this is not a role that Manitobans want to play in the global refugee crisis. We want to help families who have been through horrible trauma and who want nothing more to build a life for themselves here in our beautiful province.

Will the Premier stop threatening supports for refugees and start following through on his promise?

Mr. Pallister: Nonsense, ridiculous, Madam Speaker, an assertion that is completely based on erroneous assumptions.

The fact is we've led the country in addressing the responsibilities that we feel very strongly we must address. We have led the country, on this side of the House, without any support whatsoever from members of the NDP, and now the member makes a false assertion in this Chamber about our willingness to stand up and support refugees. That is partisan and it's putting partisanship ahead of logic and common sense.

You know, we have supported in every way we can and we look for additional ways to offer support to all agencies, all communities who are dealing with

this historic onslaught, this historic challenge. In the interest of protecting the safety of the asylum seekers, the people of our communities, the people of the province—and in serving their best interest—I encourage the member to set aside for one day her excessive partisanship and join with us in offering support to these people who are seeking hope here in our beautiful province.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, this Premier is mixing refugee supports with politics. This is simply unacceptable when we are witnessing a global refugee crisis. Even today—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —we see in the news the horrible imagery of what is being described as a chemical warfare against Syrian children and families. It is certainly not the time for the Premier to continue to feed his ego with fights and play politics with the lives of children and families who need Manitoba to step up and help them escape such atrocities.

Will the Premier commit in the House today to continue with the resettlement of 300 government-assisted refugees from abroad?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I just have to ask the member to consider the facts here. Under our government's leadership we've lead the country—lead the country—in hosting refugees and asylum seekers; No. 1, above all other provinces. And when I'd asked for help and support I've gotten it from everyone except the members opposite.

In fact, unanimously—unanimously—the premiers across the country signed a letter of support for Manitoba's desire to have support from Ottawa, unanimously, including an NDP Premier of Alberta, Madam Speaker. So everybody else in the country is on side with supporting asylum seekers and refugees in this country and in this province, except the NDP.

Who's wrong? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Equalization Transfers Indigenous Population

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): It's widely known that the indigenous people are the fastest growing population in Canada. This is especially true for Manitoba. Indigenous people make up 17 per cent of

the total population of the province, the highest share of all provinces.

Equalization transfers are based on population statistics.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) agree that the more people a province has, the more money that comes into that province?

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

And the member is correct in that we receive support from Canada in a number of categories. The member is correct in saying that 17 per cent of the population of Manitoba is First Nations, as well.

We have continued to make the point in Ottawa. The Health Minister has continued to advance the argument that we need a real recognition of that significant part of our population that is over-represented in our health care and faces some significant challenges. This is why we need that good partnership with Ottawa.

And I would remind that member that Ottawa continues to pay a lesser per cent of that share of health-care delivery in this province. That's why it's so important to get this right.

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

Ms. Klassen: Based on that fact, is it fair to say, then, that this government should demonstrate reciprocity in the spirit of truth and reconciliation?

We all heard the Premier ask several times for us to join in advocating for more money for the indigenous people of Manitoba. The Liberals were always working to that end; we didn't need to be asked.

What is this government doing to ensure those funds now be earmarked for the indigenous people of Manitoba?

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

I would also want to note for that member that, when it comes to that percentage of Manitobans that is First Nation, we have noted for the federal government, for other provinces, as well, that the number of First Nations people that continue to receive their health care off-reserve continues to grow. That percentage is up by more than 1 per cent over a four-year measurement.

So this is—it's very concerning for us. We need to have First Nations people having adequate access to health care. We can provide that. But we have to have the willing and fulsome partnership of a federal government that recognizes this and comes to the table.

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

Ms. Klassen: The budget will be laid out in exactly seven days.

Will this new government ensure that the indigenous people of Manitoba are getting what is rightfully their share of equalization transfers?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, this is very much what we've been talking to Ottawa about, to ensuring that Manitobans, collectively—and we have certainly specifically talked about the needs of our indigenous population—but ensuring that we get a fair share from Ottawa.

* (14:20)

And I'm glad the member says that she's been working with us and advocating with Ottawa. And I'm glad to hear that. It hasn't always felt that way as strongly as we would like from Liberals in this House, but if that is true, then we are glad to hear that.

But there's much more that has to be done. Whenever the CHC issue has moved on from its current state, that is not the end of this discussion. There needs to be a long-term, sustainable negotiation on health care going to the future, and I hope that this is the new commitment from her and the Liberal caucus to join us in that, Madam Speaker.

Red Tape Reduction Act Introduction of New Legislation

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): This morning we had the opportunity to talk about red tape. Members, at least on this side of the House, understand that it's important to distinguish between the difference between regulations that are necessary, efficient and effective, and regulations that are bloated, redundant and outdated.

So my question is for the Minister of Finance: Can he describe to this House today how government is working to reduce the regulatory burden on both citizens and businesses in Manitoba?

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

For 17 years Manitoba has witnessed significant growth of unnecessary and excessive regulatory burden. Our government has introduced Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act. It will repeal 15 pieces of legislation that will reduce or eliminate regulatory requirements and prohibitions. We are removing hundreds of unnecessary administrative burdens that will reduce red tape on business, non-profit, municipality, private citizens and government.

With Bill 24—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —we are rebuilding and regrowing our economy by creating more efficiencies and streamlining government operations. It will make it easier for all Manitobans to prosper and focus on their own priorities.

Winnipeg School Division Need for New Schools

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): There has not been a new school built in the Winnipeg School Division since 1993. We know the population continues to grow and we must meet education needs for our next generations.

The Waterford Green school was expected to open in 2018. It was intended to have the capacity for at least 500 students. This school is for The Maples constituency. People from other parts of Manitoba and all over the world are moving to this area. We do not only need this school, but will need another school in the area very soon.

Families in the Winnipeg School Division are waiting for an update: Will this Premier (Mr. Pallister) open this much-needed school in September 2018 for all the families who need it—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

And we are working very closely with the Winnipeg School Division to make sure that we have adequate classroom space now and into the future. It is certainly a challenge for us because we inherited a system that had been underfunded—especially when it came to infrastructure over the last 10 years—to the point where we were—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: —the lowest in Canada in terms of investments in infrastructure.

So we are working very diligently and very closely to try and make up for that shortfall.

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

Education System Cross-Cultural Curriculum

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Our Canadian society is a multicultural society, and especially in northwest Winnipeg. Students in this multicultural community must have appropriate teaching that includes cross-cultural understanding.

What steps in our Manitoba school system are being taken to create cross-cultural understanding?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): It's a pleasure to get up and answer the question.

We are very pleased to be part of a multicultural society here in Manitoba. Our government is very supportive of that. Our education system is being changed, as we speak, each year to reflect the cultural diversity that is this province. We are proud to be part of that and we certainly are pleased to participate in that.

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

Language Component

Mr. Saran: In the last Estimates discussion, I suggested that, other than English and French, a compulsory passing of a course in a language of choice should be part of the high school curriculum. As a multicultural community students should have this compulsory language component.

The honourable minister appeared in agreement with my suggestion at that time: When will the honourable minister pursue this idea?

Mr. Wishart: And we certainly like to—are working closely with a number of school divisions as to what course contents will need to be put in place. Of course, everyone in the House is aware of our commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and we certainly have done some changes already to reflect that requirement, and we intend to do further to make sure that that is well represented in the system, as it's something that our

government supports very closely. And, as part of this, we are looking for how we can include some others.

But, as the member probably knows, a high school curriculum is a very full curriculum already, and there are many requirements in the system, so we have to work very diligently and very closely to make sure that we represent every cultural diversity that is part of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Manitoba's Crime Rate Public Safety Concerns

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): This Minister of Justice appears to be obsessed with problems that don't exist, yet is wilfully blind to real issues.

The minister's priority is a voter suppression bill intended to make it more difficult for poor Manitobans to vote, despite the fact the Chief Electoral Officer said there were no concerns about fraudulent voting. Yet she ignores a rising tide of crime making Manitobans less safe in their homes and communities.

When will this minister take action to deal with real public safety concerns?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the member opposite quite rightly points out the flaws within the system and certainly what took place over the last 17 years. He was a part of a government that put us in the position that we're in right now. It's not going to be turned around overnight, but we are committed to being the most improved province over our term, and we are going to deliver for Manitobans.

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

Crime Prevention Inclusion in Budget

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Manitobans are very worried about public safety. A shooting in Transcona this morning, three dead in a shooting in East Selkirk yesterday, a Winnipeg taxi driver seriously injured in a stabbing, and that's just today's news.

You know, events like these are on the rise in Manitoba at a time when this Minister of Justice shows no interest and makes no investments in preventing crime. Winnipeg Police Service CrimeStat shows that the reported crimes are actually up 20 per cent year to date over 2016.

Will this Minister of Justice stand up for Manitoba communities and make crime prevention a priority in next week's budget?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): And we stand up for Manitobans right across this province each and every day. When it comes to justice, when it comes to health care, when it comes to education, we are standing up for Manitobans.

Members opposite had an opportunity at the time to turn the corner when it came to—the—crime in Manitoba. That member was the minister of Justice at one point in time. He had a choice. He had a choice to improve the safety for Manitobans and he chose not to, and that's unfortunate, and now we're in the situation that we're in right now, Madam Speaker. We're not going to be able to change it overnight, but we are committed to being the most improved province over our term.

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

Mr. Swan: This minister needs to put away her speaking points and look at the reality, and I table for her the most recent City of Winnipeg CrimeStat figures showing that reported crimes are way up. So far, in 2017—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —under this minister, the represented crimes—reported that crimes are up 20 per cent over the exact same period last year. This government has frozen Neighbourhoods Alive! which allows communities to pursue safety at a grassroots level. The government's left numerous agencies working with at-risk youth and adults fearful that their work preventing crime is at risk.

Will this minister give Manitobans some comfort today and confirm that supports to prevent crime will be protected and enhanced in next week's budget?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, well—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —no one is standing stronger for security for Manitobans than this minister right here, Madam Speaker.

The member opposite cared so little about the issues—[interjection]

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —that he now peacocks about today in the Chamber, Madam Speaker, that he actually resigned as the Justice Minister of the province, and he did this in an attempt to undermine his own leader of his own party.

So, you know, let this not be an example to Manitobans of how to stand up and protect the best interests of Manitobans. It will serve as an ongoing example to the people of Manitoba of how that member puts his personal priorities ahead of those of Manitobans.

This minister and this government most certainly do not do that. Our priorities are the safety and well-being of Manitobans. We accept those responsibilities and we will pursue them with diligence, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

And the background of this petition is as follows:

The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provisions of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

Dakota Collegiate Sports Complex

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize how important it is to provide young people with quality learning spaces to succeed in school.

(2) Sport recreation and the spaces to engage in them are critical to the physical, mental and social welfare of students.

(3) All forms of educational infrastructure, including gymnasiums and recreation centres in general, represent an incredible value-for-money investment, whereby the return is the improved physical and psychological health and well-being of students.

(4) Dakota Collegiate spent several years raising money toward the construction of the Louis Riel School Division sports complex to replace the poor condition of its playing field.

(5) Dakota's varsity teams have been forced to play elsewhere because of the poor conditions of its playing field.

(6) Dakota Collegiate must put the project out to tender and break ground in a matter of months for the field to be completed in time for this coming school year.

(7) The provincial government, in a regressive and short-sighted move, cancelled funding for this project for political reasons despite the extensive community support, fundraising and engagement.

(8) It is a short-sighted move on the part of the provincial government to undercut the dedicated efforts of students, staff and the community in general.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the tireless efforts of Dakota Collegiate, its students, parents, staff and the surrounding community; to recognize the need for excellent recreational facilities in all Manitoba schools; to reverse the regressive cut; and to provide the funding necessary to complete the Louis Riel School Division sports complex.

St. Boniface QuickCare Clinic

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly, and the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) QuickCare clinics support the health-care system by offering important front-line health-care services that help seniors and families.

(2) The six QuickCare clinics in Winnipeg are accessible, located within communities and have extended hours so that families and seniors can access high-quality primary health care quickly and close to home.

(3) QuickCare clinics are staffed by registered nurses and nurse practitioners who are able to diagnose and treat non-urgent care needs as well as perform procedures and interpret diagnostic tests.

(4) The bilingual St. Boniface QuickCare clinic actively offers an essential health-care service in French to Winnipeg's Franco-Manitoban community.

(5) Having access to bilingual services is essential to ensuring that the ongoing vitality of the Franco-Manitoban community.

(6) The provincial government have announced the closing of the St. Boniface QuickCare clinic on January 27th, 2017, leaving St. Boniface and St. Vital seniors and families without access to community health care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as-of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to both recognize the importance of bilingual health-care service in Manitoba and reverse their decision to close the St. Boniface QuickCare clinic, and this petition was signed by many Manitobans.

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

The taxi industry is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fee structure.

Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

Provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what have been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of driver safety and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (14:40)

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

And this petition has been signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

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

Background to this position-petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Kelvin High School Gymnasium and Wellness Centre

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize how important it is to provide young people with quality learning spaces to succeed in school.

(2) Sport, recreation and the spaces to engage in them are critical to the health and welfare of all students.

(3) All forms of educational infrastructure, including gymnasiums and recreation centres in general, represent an incredible value-for-money investment whereby the return is improved physical and psychological health and wellness.

(4) Kelvin High School is one of the largest high schools in the province with over 1,200 students.

(5) Kelvin High School spent several years raising almost \$1.2 million towards the construction of a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

(6) Some Kelvin students currently have to pay to use outside facilities to obtain their mandatory physical education credit.

(7) The provincial government, in a regressive and short-sighted move, cancelled funding for the Kelvin gym and wellness centre for political reasons despite the extensive community support, fund-raising and engagement.

(8) It is wasteful and disrespectful to the dedicated efforts of students, staff and the community in general to simply lay their goals aside without consultation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the need for excellent recreation facilities in all Manitoba schools, to reverse this regressive cut and to provide Kelvin High School with the funding necessary to complete a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

And signed by many, many Manitobans.

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that had made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by Ranjinder Sidhu, Harjit Sidhu and Gural Hothi and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a

fair and affordable fare structure—(3)—sorry—regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

* (14:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The taxi industry in Manitoba provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that have made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-share services such as Uber—or like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of driver—taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The taxi industry in Winnipeg provides an important service to all Manitobans.

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provisions of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer

jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plans to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many concerned Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, for House business this afternoon, I would like to call debate on second reading of Bill 23 followed by second readings of bills 21, 22 and 24.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, could you please canvass the House for unanimous consent to conclude debate on Bill 23 this afternoon, with the question to be put immediately following the speech by the member for Fort Garry-Riverview and a speech by one member of the government caucus.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that House business this afternoon will be debate on second reading of Bill 23, followed by second readings of bills 21, 22 and 24.

The honourable Government House Leader has also asked if there is unanimous consent of the House to conclude debate on Bill 23 this afternoon, with the question to be put immediately following

the speech by the member for Fort Garry-Riverview and a speech by one member of the government caucus.

Is there leave for that to happen?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, I'd like to call Bill 23 for debate on second reading.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 23—The Fisheries Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on second reading of Bill 23, The Fisheries Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, who has 30 minutes remaining.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm delighted to get up and put a few notes on the record regarding Bill 23, The Fisheries Amendment Act.

Now it doesn't surprise me that the Government House Leader wanted to see this move quickly through the House. I'm quite confident that after my speech, he's going to want to pull that bill, seeing the wisdom of our position and the difficulty of his own position. I am sure that after we're done, in the next 30 minutes, he'll do the right thing, he'll pull this bill and start from square one all over again.

Now we know that this bill has at its heart the elimination of the monopoly that the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation has on marketing of freshwater fish in Manitoba. And I want to touch on that word, monopoly, for just a moment, because I think it's an important notion. In some contexts and in some definitions, the meaning of the term monopoly, besides being a very complicated board game that I could never possibly finish, also conveys a thought that it belongs solely to one organization or another in which—from which all other decision making and—flows.

And that's true of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. It is a monopoly in that sense of the term. But it's a monopoly, Madam Speaker, that's designed to ensure a level playing field for all fishers in Manitoba. It's a monopoly to ensure an inclusive fishing market in Manitoba, and it's a monopoly designed to ensure that those who do not have the same capacity that others might have nevertheless

have a fair opportunity to market their fish and to ensure that they can make a good living and live a happy and productive life here in Manitoba.

The term monopoly, in this context, also reflects the important role of the indigenous community in our province and certainly in our country. It's meant to respect those who have at other times not had a fair and equitable treatment in the marketing of their fish, meant to give those folks the opportunity and the indigenous community to share in the value of our fisheries. And so, in that sense and in the sense that I've tried to convey it here this afternoon, the term monopoly actually conveys a profound public-interest design to serve all Manitobans.

And what the bill intends to do is to take out that equitable, that fair notion of monopoly and simply cast it aside—not intended as a pun but not bad, and to ensure, quite frankly, that those who have the greater wealth and the greater capacity will do—and the greater access in terms of geography will do much, much better, and those who have less capacity, less advantages of geography and, frankly, less wealth in which to invest in their operations will suffer.

*(15:00)

And it's been a central conviction of the NDP going back to our origins in 1961 and the CCF before that in 1933. But that's not the kind of Manitoba that we envision. Frankly, we envision one that is actually equitable for all, one that is fair for all, one that ensures a level playing field for all, and we have rejected out of hand any notion that some should profit while the vast majority suffer.

And, in fact, what this bill has as its central feature is the privileging of elite interests at the expense of a very wide and diverse industry that is inclusive of many, many Manitobans, inclusive of our indigenous brothers and sisters, and the bill only wants to ensure that those with the greatest wealth get the greatest privilege. It's a classic class situation if ever there was one.

And so we've taken the position that the government ought to think very, very carefully about this bill, but we know, in fact, that it won't. The truth of the matter is, is this government is bent and determined to privilege the interests of the few at the expense of the many. As I said before in debate on another matter, it's kind of reverse utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill would not be very happy with this particular notion of what it is, but it's the central feature of Conservative governments.

And I know they like to call themselves Progressive Conservatives. We regard that as untrue, to say the least, and an oxymoron for sure. I tried not to overemphasize the second part of that term, but nevertheless an oxymoron. There's nothing progressive about what the government is putting forward on a whole range of legislation, and certainly nothing—nothing—progressive or compelling about this particular piece of legislation, but, as I say, has, at its heart, the interest to protect the wealth and privilege of a few at the expense of many, many others.

And to say this is disappointing would be an understatement. To say it's a surprise, well, not so much because this has been the way of Conservative governments since time immemorial in this country. It's certainly been the way of provincial Conservative governments in Manitoba since the origins of this wonderful province in 1870, and it's sad that they're unable to progress through time but, in fact, always want to go backwards.

We've said before forward, not back, and it's become the calling card of the Conservative caucus to say back, not forward, and that is not surprising. It's consistent with the way in which Conservative governments have operated, as I've said, throughout our history, and it's certainly consistent with how this government tries to emulate Conservative governments of recent past, whether that Conservative government be the Harper regime in Ottawa that was unceremoniously dumped by the Canadian people in an election just a year or so or more ago, and it was unceremoniously dumped in that federal election precisely because it showed a back, not forward, type of approach to public policy, and that also intended to privilege the wealthy and the well-to-do over the interests and the public interests of all Manitobans.

And it's safe to say, Madam Speaker, that this government—or our government always—always—governed for all the people all the time, and it's quite clear that this Conservative government and this particular Premier (Mr. Pallister) is preparing to government for a—govern for a few people for all of the time. That's not the kind of Manitoba that we envision, and that's not what we want to see happen. And the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation is a classic example where the benefits of that corporation and of its monopoly flow to all Manitobans, and it helps to ensure that whatever the disadvantages of capacity or geography are in place that that ought not to be a concern, because, with the

current Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, there's always going to be a place to market your product and ensure that you can make—one can make a good living off of it.

What we know will happen now, of course, is something quite dramatically different. Those with the greater geographical positioning, those with the greater capacity will certainly thrive under a system like this. But, for many, many others, they will certainly suffer and likely lose their ability not only to conduct their fishing operation in the way that they want; they're not going to be able to do that. They're going to be simply—quite simply, put out of work and, from there, they're not going to be able to support their families. They're not going to be able to make a contribution to their neighbourhoods and to their communities. And the result will be further costs for the people of Manitoba, except they're not going to—those supports won't be there, because the government's busy cutting so many other elements, whether it's in health or education or in justice or infrastructure underspending, the failure of Crown corporations to actually leverage their ability to help invest in the people of Manitoba and the growth and development of this province. And so you have a very vicious cycle that's quite likely to be undertaken as a result of legislation just like this, Madam Speaker, that seeks to undermine the diversity of Manitoba and the well-being of Manitobans who are engaged in this industry.

Now we know that commercial fisheries, and mainly on Lake Winnipeg and Lake Winnipegosis, Lake Manitoba as well as some smaller operations, generate about \$20 million of income for Manitoba fishers annually through the sale of walleye and goldeye and northern pike and lake whitefish and lake trout. And they sell these products all across the world and to the United States, to Europe, Israel and China, a very diverse marketplace, to say the least.

And so, as my friend from Minto often says about the Justice Minister, here you have the Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox), who I believe put this piece of legislation forth, trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist. And this is, frankly, the Conservative way. It's to solve problems that don't exist, and they do that not—and not only because they don't know what they're doing, which that seems fairly self-evident from anything we've witnessed in the last year, but they do that because their approach to governing is to privilege a very few people at the expense of everyone else.

And, you know, that's why we have a job to do in opposition, and, you know, it's fair to say that the people of Manitoba placed us in this position; that's how democracy works. All of us, on this side of the House, can live with that. But it's a reminder of the important jobs that we have to do in opposition, and it's doubly important reminder that it's so good to have New Democrats holding the government to account for the actions that they take.

* (15:10)

We know, already, it seemed to us, that the independent Liberal caucus, if that's what they are, the three members that constitute that party, look to be in support of this particular bill, and that's classic capital L Liberal politics in this province and in this House—a little bit here, a little bit there, but never standing for actually anything important. So it's absolutely indispensable that we have New Democrats in the House to fight for all of the people of Manitoba all the time. And that's something that we take very seriously and something that we intend to hold the government to account, fight the good fight, as David Lewis once said—an iconic New Democrat if ever there was one—and to do our job on behalf of the people of Manitoba, regardless of whether we're in government or in opposition.

Now, there are many elements to the bill besides just wiping out the monopoly that are probably worth mentioning—and I know other members certainly in my caucus will want to talk about them—many, many elements. But I think the most troubling—I don't think, in fact, I know, that the most troubling is what seems to us to be the self-evident violation of the rights of indigenous people by making the decision to pull out of the marketing corporation before actually consulting with indigenous fishers. It's become clear to us that the duty to consult is not something that this government takes very seriously at all. Instead, it's more of a pretence toward consultation as opposed to what the Constitution of this country actually says, which is a duty to consult. And it's pretty clear in this particular piece of legislation that the government didn't do the kind of work that's necessary when it comes to fulfilling the principle, the intent and the actual wording of that most important part of the Canadian Constitution in section 35, which we call the duty to consult.

Now, it's fair to say that there may be some indigenous fishers from the Metis community or maybe from the First Nation community who see some advantage in that, but what we've found in the

work that we've done, in the consultations that have been done by any number of members on our side of the House on this particular piece of legislation, what we've found is that the vast majority are not supportive of this particular approach because they know that the monopoly, such as it was, of the corporation served them very, very well. And so at a minimum of, frankly, central, but at a minimum, was the government's obligation to actually do a comprehensive consultation on this bill before tabling it before the Legislature. And, in fact, what we have, again, is that sort of reverse notion that they seem to operate by, which is to table the legislation, talk to a few folks and then call that consultation and hope that it all works out in the end.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And we know this is not the way to proceed. In the era of reconciliation, especially, Mr. Deputy Speaker—welcome back to the Chair—in the era of reconciliation, it's absolutely incumbent upon governments to take the duty to consult very, very seriously. It was put by my friend from Wolseley yesterday, in talking about this particular bill—and I have to say it was an excellent speech, a very learned speech, one that we were all able to take something substantial from—he put it quite plainly that it's quite likely that this bill is unconstitutional before it even gets out of the gate. And it may be that, like so many other pieces of legislation tabled by this government, it's going to find its way into court. And then there will be a protracted legal struggle around it—I'm not saying this will happen, I say—but I do say it's a potential of this legislation, as well as many others, to get into a protracted legal battle over it that only serves to divide Manitobans against themselves at the very time that it's incumbent upon governments, in the era of reconciliation, to actually find ways to unite Manitobans.

And, if there's anything that's become clear about this particular Premier in the way that he operates is his divide-and-conquer strategy, except that's turned out to be an abject failure; he divides and loses. And I don't have to tell you—I'm going to, but I don't have to tell you—the very number of places in which that divide-and-lose strategy has failed. It failed categorically when it came to the expansion and enhancement of the CPP designed to enhance and serve all Canadians in generations to come, and, at the end of the day, the Finance Minister finally figured it out, got some political advice to say act like a New Democrat, went along and signed that agreement, and we're glad that he did. But that's an

example of the divide-and-lose strategy that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has been following.

And then the Premier comes up with this divide-and-lose strategy over both the health-care accord and then the climate change accord in which he held climate change hostage to signing of a health accord. He said that he was going to stand shoulder to shoulder with every other premier until they stopped standing shoulder to shoulder with him and cut his own—cut their own deals, and he was left talking tough a week ago, and then yesterday he turned tail and sort of just said, well, you know, actually, I guess it's good enough; we'll sign it. It's quite a remarkable series of events when it comes to a very poor strategy of divide and lose, but it's an example of it.

But the result of that is not only being that the government is paralyzed on health care, still haven't signed the climate change accord, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is—*[interjection]*—member behind me says it's unbelievable. It is unbelievable. We're not saying that that climate change accord was the be-all and end-all of the world. There's certainly enormous work that needs to be done to make sure that we have a province and a country and a global village that survives into generations to come. But we are saying that it's up to this Premier to put his signature on that climate change accord in order to show good faith that Manitoba's going to be a leader in the fight against climate change, and, of course, he's failed to do that.

And then it became clear over the weekend that, not satisfied that he was 0 for 3 on his divide-and-lose strategy, then the Premier went to bat on infrastructure. And we find out that he's left half a billion dollars on the table when it comes to spending and investing in the infrastructure and the good jobs that come with building that infrastructure here in Manitoba. And so I know that the Premier is a big baseball fan. It's not surprising that he is a big baseball fan because he was a pitcher, and that made him the centre of attention, and nothing that this Premier likes more than being the centre of attention. But, in fact, through the first nine innings of his divide-and-lose strategy, he's actually 0 for 4; he has an obligation to do better than he's done to date. And, in saying this, he's also—is positioning Manitoba not only to be a colossal failure on federal-provincial relations, and it's, as was pointed out in an op-ed piece on CBC online by Paul Thomas today, this is not the traditional Manitoba position. We have always taken a position to be—make this province and

this country work, and what we found instead is the Premier, who's quite an outlier and really not able to get along with anyone, and his strategy on federal-provincial relations is not only been abject failure but, I might add, a colossal embarrassment for the people of Manitoba.

* (15:20)

So some legislation—some of the things that the government has done has just not worked out on the federal stage, and then we have other pieces of legislation like this one that's likely, as I said earlier, to end up in court as simply being unconstitutional and will result in protracted legal debate, will be divisive and endlessly quite costly and all for trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is why we're standing four-square in opposition to this bill, why every member of our caucus is excited to get up and speak to it and to put our cards on the table, that we're always going to stand with all Manitobans.

We're always going to make sure that there's an inclusive place for Manitobans and that everybody has a chance to succeed and, instead, what the government intends to do is to make the field unlevel, make sure that some are privileged at the expense of others, and the result will likely be a fishing industry that, like so many other industries in this province, is going to suffer dramatically. And it's not that industries suffer; specifically, it's not just that. It's that people suffer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when our businesses suffer, and that's not what we in the NDP are about, we'll never be about—and why it's so important that we stand in opposition to this particular bill.

It seems—the thing about this bill, and I actually could say that, in one sense, we could actually have a really good and profound and deep public-policy debate on this bill, if it wasn't so transparently ideological. And we see, in almost everything this government does, is that it's motivated not by the public interest, not by the—by what the people of Manitoba need or what they want, it's motivated—the government seems completely and utterly motivated by ideological interests. But, worse than that, it's an ideology that has proven to be a colossal failure at almost every single turn.

This reversion to the failed ideological positions of the past will be shown, in due time and in short order, to be a failure that is a profound disservice to the people of Manitoba, will contribute nothing to

building this province and will, at the end of the day, put us way back instead of moving us forward.

It's pretty clear to those of us who have been around for a while, and not been elected for all that long but have been around for a while, that we spent a great deal of time in—when we were first elected in 1999, repairing the considerable damage that was done by the Conservative government during the 1990s when they had a choice to invest in Manitoba and to keep things going for all the people of Manitoba or to do what they're doing now, which is to make heartless cuts to the programs and services that Manitobans rely on. That will only set us back, and the worst part of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that it's our children that are going to suffer as a result of that.

There's no question that access to education is going to decline over this government; it's transparently obvious. I don't need to remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, when these folks were last in government in the 1990s, tuition went up by 132 per cent. Not surprisingly, enrolment declined by 10 per cent. And the universities themselves had no investment in the capital infrastructure. Our colleges had no investment in their infrastructure.

So we—I want to be sure to get our message out to the people of Manitoba, that we ought to go forward, not back, and this bill is a classically ideological bill that is designed to take Manitoba back not only maybe to the 20th century but quite likely back to the 19th century and before. And this is a industry, by the way, that has its roots since time immemorial. It's not like other industries; I'm quite confident in saying people have been fishing for a long, long, long, long time and a very, very, long time, very long, an exceedingly long time.

I have to admit I was not much of a fisher myself. My brothers, great fishers, by the time I was old enough to join them in the boat, they were too old and had moved on, and I was left alone to catch no fish all on my own. It was not the first boat I'd been thrown out of and probably not be the last.

But, in all 'seriouseuses', as I see my time growing short, and that I hear the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) asking leave that I can keep going and I'm happy to do so. I know that since he actually does—accomplishes very little, he really needs to rely on others to do his work for him. But we're going to stand in opposition to this bill—and we're going to stand in opposition to this bill because it's ideologically motivated and it doesn't serve the

people of Manitoba very well; it only serves some. We're here to fight for all the people of Manitoba all the time.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli): It's a pleasure of mine today to put some facts on the record regarding Bill 23, The Fisheries Amendment Act.

Currently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the authority to regulate interprovincial and export trade is commercially caught fish resides exclusively with Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, or the FFMC, a federal Crown corporation. Manitoba has been participating—Manitoba has been the participating province under an agreement with the Government of Canada since it established FFMC in 1969.

In August 2016, our provincial government made good on a campaign promise by announcing that we are moving to create flexible marketing options for Manitoba's commercial fishers. The Province provided notice to the federal government that Manitoba is withdrawing from *[inaudible]* agreement under the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act. The transition to flexible marketing is expected to occur no later than August 17, 2017, or one year from the notice being provided. This will allow Manitoba fishers to sell their fish in other provinces, internationally and independently of FFMC. Fishers will have the opportunity to explore new markets to potentially increase their family incomes. Buyers will be able to purchase directly from Manitoba fishers. This bill will make those changes a reality and establish a new regulatory regime.

Amendments to the fishery—amendments to The Fisheries Act in Manitoba will permit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba commercial fishers to sell and market legally caught fish interprovincially and internationally.

This bill will end the monopoly that FFMC has on marketing for freshwater fish in Manitoba and put in place a new regulatory regime.

Any person who meets the requirements established by the regulation may obtain a fish dealer's licence. This authorizes a person to purchase and sell fish within Manitoba for export.

The bill also requires the operator of the fish processing facility to be licensed unless the facility is operated by the licensed fish dealer or a commercial fisher, who, Mr. Deputy Speaker, only processes fish he or she caught or if the facility is located at a retail operation. Our commercial fishers are an important

part of Manitoba's economy. Commercial fishing—fishers catch an excess of \$21 million in income to their families each and every year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, fishers work hard, and often prices are low. Creating flexible marketing options will help fishers achieve greater earning potential and will allow them to put more money back into their—back into the economy and benefiting the entire province.

At the same time, the FFMC will continue to be an option for fishers who wish to use it. The legislation merely creates a choice for those who wish to market outside the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

* (15:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think this is the area—the clarity that needs to be understood on members opposite side of the House, that there will be options for fishers to continue to market their fish through Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation and/or choose a market of their choice.

We recognize that there are challenges in adapting to more flexible markets, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is why our government has set up the fisheries envoy, who will assist fishers and communities to take advantage of their new market opportunities. The envoy's responsible for developing a new framework for commercial fish sales in a flexible marketing environment. The envoy is responsible for consulting commercial fishing communities, indigenous groups and business to identify important issues and opportunities. The policies that were developed in consultation with fishers will ensure effective and sustainable fishers management and allow us to establish catch and sales reporting requirements.

For decades, fishers in Manitoba have advocated for the right to sell their product on their own. The former NDP government ignored the pleas for 17 years, forcing many Manitoba fishers to sell their product for less than what it was worth. But no longer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This change is truly going to be a win-win for fishers. It gives them the choice of freedom. Those who choose FFMC can continue to market through FFMC; those who choose to go it alone can choose to do so.

Manitoba's fish products are world-class and our fishers deserve to get top dollar for their fish. We are very confident that there is a demand for our fisheries' products, and that, with a properly managed

transition, Manitoba fishers will have no problem competing on the global market. Our government will be encouraging new viable enterprises to look to Manitoba commercial fishery and capitalize on those opportunities.

Members opposite also expressed concerns for First Nations fishers in this province. Well, let me say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we share those concerns in this province, of course, for indigenous fishers, and we want to continue to be a vibrant successful part of the fishery. So let us look at a few of those First Nations people that we've been speaking with.

Madam Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few weeks ago, we met with a group from the Southeast Resource Development Council, led by Chief Bear, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation. His group represents many of the First Nations fishers on the southeast—east sides of Lake Winnipeg. They are very excited about moving into the freshwater fish open-market business and about providing employment for their people and not just fishing but in the processing and transportation as well.

On the other side of the lake, Norway House Fishermen's Co-op is already the largest commercial fishing operation in the province. Chief Ron Evans said, and, I quote: We are pleased with the Manitoba government's decision to allow for—create flexible marketing options for commercial fishers. And went on to say: "We have been exploring options as of late, especially opportunities to sell our rough fish to foreign markets."

Madam Speaker, I also had the opportunity today to speak with a member from Kewatinook, and I can tell you and I can share that conversation with the House, that her community has—is very excited about the opportunity to, once again, build the fishing industry in the North, bring dollars back to the North, ensure that fishing is backed strong in northern Manitoba, where they can have choice to ensure their families are taken care of. And that was the discussion we had today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As members may know, one of the challenges with FFMC is that it hasn't been willing to accept rough fish or opportunity fish, and this limits the species which fishers can catch and sell. It's also caused a lot of waste, as fishers are forced to discard species which they can't sell. On an open market, that will be no longer the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker; fishers, like those at Norway House, will be able to sell greater variety of fish to greater variety of

customers. That is why Chief Evans and Chief Bear are excited about the change; they have the opportunity to bring new products into the markets and to generate more revenue and employment for their communities. That's something we should all get behind.

And, in closing, Manitoba's new government is ensuring that the province is open for business. After decades of being required to sell fish to FFMC alone, Manitoba fishers are finally getting the freedom they have asked for. This is just one more example of how our province is on the road to recovery. The skies are now blue in Manitoba in the fishing industry.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that debate on Bill 23 now be adjourned.

* * *

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, as previously stated, I would like to call Bill 21 for second reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It's been called by the Government House Leader that Bill 21 will be read for the second time.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 21—The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade that Bill 21, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act; Loi sur la responsabilité financière et la protection des contribuables, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), that bill 21, the financial responsibility and taxpayers protection act, be read to the committee of this House—oh, sorry—to be read now for the second time and to be referred to the committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I've tabled the message—

tabled the message—the Minister of Finance tabled the message.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 21, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act. This is a piece of legislation which sets out a principled course of sound financial decision making for government. This legislation replaces the former Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act introduced in 2008 and subsequently repealed by our government following the 2016 election.

Bill 21 is introduced in advance of Budget 2017 to confirm our commitment to move the province toward balance in a responsible way while protecting taxpayers and their rights as citizens in Manitoba. It will ensure that government is accountable to Manitobans and sets forward a clear course towards a sustainable and stable future for the province of Manitoba.

Starting in 2017, the Minister of Finance must table a budget for the government reporting entity every year by April the 30th. At the same time, Bill 21 establishes the requirement that the budget includes a fiscal responsibility strategy, replacing the previous financial management strategy. This provision outlines a clear description of the government's financial objectives for the fiscal year and into the future. Additionally, it may include future fiscal year projections and any other specific fiscal measures.

Once the budget is balanced, the government must set out debt reduction objectives as part of that annual fiscal responsibility strategy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 21 will require that each consecutive budget that a government brings shows progress toward the goal of balancing the budget through progressively smaller deficits. Until the deficit is eliminated, the government is prohibited from incurring a deficit that is more than that baseline amount. This baseline amount is set by legislation as either the annual deficit amount projected for the 2017 budget or, if it is lower, the actual lower annual deficit amount for any fiscal year starting with 2017, as reported in the Public Accounts.

* (15:40)

Once our province returns to balance through a pragmatic, through a moderate approach, then the government must maintain balance. Our government

and future governments will be held accountable for the decisions that they make and will no longer be able to begin incurring deficits without penalties.

That being said, Bill 21 does give government some flexibility that it would require when faced with significant unforeseen events. These provisions were also in place in the original legislation and in the 2008 iteration of that legislation, because we understand that, at times, governments can be faced with unforeseen and significant events, like some of the events that our province has faced in the past, events such as natural disasters or a sudden and dramatic reduction in revenue from the federal government that occurs after a budget has been tabled in the Legislative Assembly or 30 days before the tabling of the provincial budget. In essence, this provision is there to ensure that government, if it does not have adequate time to respond to a significant event, there would be an acknowledgement of that for a limited time period.

In this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the deficit or surplus amount is to be calculated on a summary basis. Certain amounts are excluded from that summary calculation, such as a Manitoba Hydro net income or net loss. Our government believes that Manitoba Hydro should stand on its own and be operated like any other business. Manitoba and Manitobans are the sole shareholders in this Crown corporation, and we expect prudent financial management from this asset for the benefit of all Manitobans that share in that goal.

Additionally, adjustments are to be made for amounts transferred to or from the Fiscal Stabilization Account, also known in this province as the rainy-day fund. As part of the Public Accounts for a fiscal year, the Minister of Finance must report on the deficit or surplus amount and compare actual results with the budget. The report will examine whether we are on track for our fiscal responsibility strategy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 21 establishes and clearly lays out the responsibility of members of the Executive Council to stay on course by ensuring that Cabinet member salaries reflect the commitment to the principles within this legislation. Once enacted, this legislation would provide for an immediate 20 per cent reduction to all ministerial salaries while the deficit exists against the baseline. It is simple: if there is a contravening deficit, ministers will incur that penalty. Each year, the government will set out deficit-reduction targets, and only when results of

our efforts are demonstrated in the annual audited Public Accounts will that additional amount be reimbursed. If we have achieved progress and the deficit is reduced, only then is that salary reduction provided back to members of Cabinet. Think of it as a merit pay, a holdback, and the trigger being the results as produced in the Public Accounts. If no progress is made by year three, April the 1st, 2019, against the baseline and the results of the Public Accounts for year one are available, then 40 per cent of ministerial pay will be withheld.

These measures are to act as incentives to government to not reverse course and to work toward returning to balance. I like to say that it is a protection that is there to ensure that governments do not lose their enthusiasm towards—to driving toward balance. Furthermore, if the deficit exceeds by \$100 million or more, ministerial salary for the year is reduced by the amount withheld. In other words, ministers would receive none of the withheld amounts back. If that deficit exceeds by less than \$100 million, ministerial salary is reduced proportionately. Withholding does not apply to a new minister in the fiscal year of their appointment, and any increase in withholding to 40 per cent does not apply to that new minister in the second and third fiscal years following their appointment. These exceptions also apply to ministers appointed following a general election that would result in a change of government. The withholding would only begin the following April 1st at 20 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 21 reflects our government's commitment to tabling new balanced budget legislation, as was promised in the November 2016 Speech from the Throne. The legislation enshrines our goal of setting out long-term financial sustainability and, in addition, to provide Manitoba taxpayers with enforceable protection. This 'includes' the restoration of Manitobans' right to vote on major tax increases. A non-binding referendum must be held before the government introduces any bill to increase the rate of tax under the health and post-secondary education tax levy, otherwise known as the payroll tax, The Income Tax Act, or The Retail Sales Tax Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the most underlining strengths of Bill 21 is that it cannot be amended, it cannot be repealed without being referred to the committee stage of a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly for public meetings to be held with seven days' notice. The intent of this legislation is to establish in law that the government has a

commitment to pursuing a fiscally sustainable and responsible approach to budgeting. By setting these principles in legislation, future governments would face public scrutiny if and when the legislation and values expressed therein are abandoned or replaced. Essentially, let government make the case to their people for a tax to be raised.

Balanced budget legislation is definitely nothing new in the province of Manitoba. It remains enacted in many other jurisdictions, including BC, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, as well as internationally—for example, in most states in the United States of America, in Germany, in New Zealand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the financial challenges that we face today must be faced by all of government. We have been clear on this. This is work that requires all hands on deck. And we have asked departments, Crown corporations, civil servants, our partners in Health and Education, to be a part of this road to recovery that we are on in the province of Manitoba.

The results that we report represent a summary of financial results for all of the provincial public service. And, as such, this legislation calls for all hands on deck. It requires our reporting entities to demonstrate efforts to stay on course with central government.

Our government is committed to being accountable and acting in good faith to Manitobans today, tomorrow and into the far future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to put these words on the record. I'm recommending this legislation. I look forward to the debate that will occur in the following days.

I would note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I welcome the opportunity to respond to questions on this bill from members of the opposition and provide clarifications where I can.

Questions

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

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I think that there's a consensus across the House that this act is misnamed and that it really ought to be called the Premier and Cabinet salary increase protection act.

Would the Finance Minister agree to change the name of the act?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): The member for Fort Garry-Riverview continues to show that he is no respecter of the actual legislation as it's written.

I want to take this opportunity to indicate, once again, for the member that where his government broke the rules of the legislation, gave themselves a raise, section 6.3 of Bill 38, the original Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act, clearly spells out that a salary reduction does not apply to a minister appointed after the election in respect of a negative balance as at the end of the fiscal year in which the election occurred.

The member should start to read—if he'd read the bill, he would understand that they broke the rules. This government did not.

*(15:50)

Mr. Allum: Frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Manitoba would like the Finance Minister to put accurate information on the public record instead of misinformation as he consistently does.

Does—can he tell us, if he would, just what—how much a referendum, should he have to hold one, would cost?

Mr. Friesen: I need to clarify something for the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum). He said I was not putting accurate information on the record. He reflects on his own legislation. I am reading from the 2008, Bill 38, that his government enacted in 2008. The provisions of this bill, under 6(3), say that "the salary reduction does not apply to a minister appointed after the election in respect of a negative balance as of the end of the fiscal year in which the election occurred; or the immediately preceding fiscal year." If that's inaccurate information, I would invite him to clarify that he really thinks so. It's his bill. These were the provisions by which our government abided. They were the provisions that that government broke.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): To the Finance Minister: section 9(1) refers to The Income Tax Act. Does this mean that increasing any tax in any bracket in The Income Tax Act or making a change that

would result in an increased tax in any way on income would be caught within the requirement to have a referendum or consultation to the public?

Mr. Friesen: For the purposes of this act, a major tax increase is defined, as I had mentioned earlier, which would be The Income Tax Act, the retail sales act or the health and education tax levy, otherwise known as the payroll tax.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd invite the Finance Minister actually to answer the question that was put to him. How much will his non-binding referendum cost?

Mr. Friesen: I would indicate to the member that while a referendum would undoubtedly come with a cost, I remind him that there are many other jurisdictions both in Canada, US, around the world that have similar provisions. I would suggest to the member that there is a far greater cost to Manitobans for a government not to have to be accountable to its own citizens to bring a tax hike in contravention of acting—or of legislation that is in place. That is exactly what the NDP government did. I would suggest to that member that the real cost is a government that does not want to be accountable to its citizens.

Mr. Allum: I guess that's an admission that the Finance Minister actually doesn't know what it would cost to hold a non-binding referendum. So I would ask him, then: What threshold will that referendum require? Is it 50 plus one? Is it 60? Is it 75? Just—what's the threshold he has in mind?

Mr. Friesen: That would be a good point of discussion that we could have as a province to indicate what would be the threshold for that kind of thing, and we would invite that conversation. I know that during the course of debate, as we have debate in this House, I would be open to the suggestions that members of the opposition would have to set parameters around this kind of thing.

What I would value is an evidence-based approach. I'm a former educator myself. I care about assessment. I care about evaluation, and I think that we could set probably some very good parameters looking at other jurisdictions and having the former legislation to guide us in this matter.

Mr. Allum: So the Finance Minister proposes legislation that has its essential objective to lock in his raise he's already given himself: \$14,000 and \$22,000. We ask him a very important point on his non-binding referendum as to what it would cost; he

doesn't know. We ask him what the threshold will be for accepting the outcome of that referendum; he doesn't know.

So shouldn't he have done his homework before tabling this legislation?

Mr. Friesen: Once again, I will take the opportunity to correct the false information put on the record by the member. The NDP government gave themselves a raise when they changed The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act. They decided that they didn't want to take the mandatory 40 per cent pay cut following their inability to make progress in the deficit.

So they amended the legislation in 2010, and established an economic recovery period during which the balanced budget was not required and at which time that salary penalties to ministers would not apply. They kept this legislation provision in place for five years, costing Manitobans approximately a million dollars.

That's called breaking the rules and it was the path that the NDP government chose to take. It is the reason we—

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

Mr. Allum: Ironic that his time would be up when he doesn't even answer the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're trying to get some information from the Finance Minister and he keeps referring to his talking points and that's a disappointment.

So I'll ask him one more time, what will be the threshold for his referendum, will it be 50 plus one, 55-45, 60-40, what is it? What is the threshold he has in mind? He should know this before he tables this legislation in the House.

Mr. Friesen: I'm pleased to see the member getting right down to the nitty gritty of the bill and the referendum requirement. It shows me, it demonstrates that he shares the concern that our government has, that a referendum of this type should be in place in this province. It also shows a real change of course for the NDP who chose to go to court to actually take away the right of Manitobans to have a say on a major tax hike.

So I sense that this may have been kind of road to Damascus conversion moment for the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), and I thank him for his support of this important measure of this legislation.

Mr. Allum: Well, that's a tremendously disappointing answer from the Minister of Finance who just put misinformation on the public record. One party in this House took it to court, that was his party and he knows it. Will he apologize for that comment right now?

Mr. Friesen: I would also note for the record for the member for Fort Garry-Riverview that his own government put provisions in law when it came to referendum, referenda I should say in respect of Manitoba Hydro and other Crown corporations. They set in place requirements that would trigger that kind of question to the general public. Perhaps he would want to indicate what were the technical provisions of that referendum requirement.

Mr. Allum: So let's get this straight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he doesn't have the information, he doesn't know what the bill is about, and he's putting misinformation on the record. I'm telling you, this is a guy who doesn't deserve a raise.

But let me just say—ask him this then, why isn't there a carbon tax included in this bill?

Mr. Friesen: I welcome the question because it gives me an opportunity again to clarify that while this government followed the rules as spelled out by that member's own legislation from 2008, they did not follow the rules and they broke it. And so that is exactly why we bring legislation that is required, or that is required in this province to raise and insist on that accountability of government to its ratepayers, to its citizens, to taxpayers. So that's the clarification I'd like to bring on that point.

Mr. Allum: We're bound and determined to get an answer from this Finance Minister one way or another from this question and answer session.

We know that the federal government is going to require a carbon tax to be imposed in Manitoba whether this Finance Minister likes it or not. Will he be putting that to a non-binding referendum for which he doesn't know what the threshold will be?

Mr. Friesen: It's a puzzling course that the member weaves through because it presupposes that he is in favour of the legislation, and yet his own government broke exactly these provisions when they raised the PST to 8 per cent and took away the right of every Manitoban to vote. So I think that what we could interpret through his winding narrative is that now he stands on side of such legislation that would actually protect taxpayers. And as I mentioned, protecting

taxpayers on all the major tax increases, the retail sales tax, the payroll tax, and The Income Tax Act.

Mr. Allum: So let's get this straight, the bill says that there will be a non-binding referendum for which the Finance Minister doesn't know the cost and doesn't know the threshold will be, and it will be put forward in the event of an increase in The Health and Post Secondary Education Tax Levy Act, The Income Tax Act, or the retail sales act? We know a carbon tax is in here, or is going to be coming. Why is it not included in this bill? It's a simple question.

* (16:00)

Mr. Friesen: So, as the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) continues to put false information on the record and to get more angry, I'll simply clarify for his benefit that this provision of a referendum is not new to this province, that his own party, when they were in government, brought provisions of referenda and required them in law in respect of the Crown corporations. So it seems odd that now he jumps up and down and seems outraged by the presence of a referendum requirement, and yet his own party, when they were in power, chose to put those protections in place for Manitobans at times that were more convenient to them.

Mr. Allum: Well, I'm not sure why the Finance Minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, answers in the way he does. We're trying to get him to give us a straight answer on any one of a number of questions. He's simply unable to do it. He seems to major in condescension, but he has absolutely no interest in providing the House any details.

So I want to ask him: How will a public sector wage freeze affect Manitoba's front-line workers?

Mr. Friesen: I assure the member that he has his master's degree in condescension; I don't even take that class as an elective.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want to say that what this legislation clearly sets out, and I think what the member alludes to, is that it proceeds—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Go ahead.

Mr. Friesen: —from the point of ministerial responsibility. It says that we must have provisions in place to protect Manitobans at the front end of this operation, and if ministers don't make their targets, they don't receive that top up.

Mr. Allum: Well, frankly, just to put the correct information on the record, I have a higher degree in condescension than just an MA, but that's another subject altogether.

But I want to ask the Finance Minister, he's been unable to put any information on the table that's at all helpful, but we went to committee on this particular bill—or, on the repealing the balanced budget legislation. Those who came out said, don't ever do balanced budget legislation again. Why is he ignoring the opinion of Manitobans?

Mr. Friesen: I would want to remind the member that the idea of balanced budget legislation is in place in many other jurisdictions in Canada, including BC, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. It's in place in most US states, in place in New Zealand, but, moreover, shouldn't we remind that member that his own party brought balanced budget legislation when they were elected in '99? Former Premier Gary Doer said he would protect the balanced budget legislation and they did not repeal it in 2008; actually they renewed it in 2008. Why was it good enough for Gary Doer and why is it not good enough for this member from Fort Garry-Riverview?

Mr. Allum: Well, the one thing that we did accomplish, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was 10 balanced budgets in a row. This guy—this Finance Minister has one budget and he blew the doors off the budget right from the get-go, so he is—we'll take no lessons from him.

What does he have to tell Manitobans about why we need legislation that belongs, quite rightly, in the 20th century?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I remind that member that cannabis is not yet legal in the province of Manitoba, and I do not know what he is alluding to by saying 10 balanced budgets. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all understand Manitoba's debt has doubled to \$21 billion. As a Province, they left an almost billion-dollar deficit and in their last year alone they projected \$400-million deficits and clocked in at \$865 million. What is that member even referring to, and can he say that again on the record with a straight face?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period is now expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for debate.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I move, seconded by the minister—the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that debate on this bill be adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the member for Fort Garry-Riverview, seconded by the member for St. Johns, that the debate be now adjourned. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those—has—there has been a no.

So I just want to ask the—all those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

An Honourable Member: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I guess the Yeas have it.

Point of Order

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a point of order. First we're going to resolve the question, so we'll actually—again, we'll actually say—I believe that the—there has been—that the motion was carried and debate has been adjourned.

So now on the point of order from the member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: I just want to put on the record that I'm ashamed of the actions of the NDP to shut down debate. *[interjection]* They should—this is a ridiculous position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I want to thank the member for River Heights on that point of order, but it's not a point of order, but I want to thank you for your few words, so—kind words, and we'll move on to the next bill.

* * *

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): We already indicated earlier that we were going to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Bill 22?

Mr. Micklefield: Bill 22.

Bill 22—The Regulatory Accountability Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. So we'll move it on to Bill 22, the regulatory accountability act and amendment act of the statute of and regulation act.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Wishart) that Bill 22, The Regulatory Accountability Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the Minister of Education and Training, that Bill 22, The Regulatory Accountability Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill by the Minister of Finance that tabled this message—and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to present Bill 22 which proposes the new Regulatory Accountability Act and amends The Statutes and Regulations Act. I have to confess I'm a little surprised to be proceeding to this bill so quickly after a very abbreviated debate on our previous measures. I can only interpret as a result that we must have the unqualified support of at least the members of the new democrat party because there was no comments that they wished to put on the record.

I would note that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was unable to put his comments on the record. I will anticipate that those were also comments that would have supported this very significant and worthy legislation. *[interjection]*

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on a point of order.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct the minister and ask him not to put misleading comments on the record, particularly after I have been denied the ability to speak by the NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the point of order from the member of River Heights, it's not a point of order and we thank you for your comments and so we'll continue with the Minister for Finance.

* * *

Mr. Friesen: That last comment of mine proved to be a bridge too far. In any case, I am very pleased to present Bill 22 at this time.

*(16:10)

Our government, as we have indicated, is committed to being Canada's most improved province when it comes to regulatory accountability by the year 2020. This legislation sets the framework to achieve that vision.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that when it comes to regulatory accountability for the past 17 years, Manitoba has been the laggard of this nation. I believe that we received an F in the 2016 Red Tape Report Card issued annually by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and I would acknowledge, as well, that, as a teacher in the public school system for 12 years, that F does not stand for fantastic.

As a matter of fact, under the previous government, Manitoba ranked as the least accountable province in Manitoba. We did not measure the growth of regulation. We had no central counting mechanism of the regulatory burden experienced by sectors like business and agriculture and non-profits and industry and people in their own household and people interacting with government. We did not report progress, because there was no progress to report. And, as a result, one thing is clear from the context that we have now: there is room to improve. And there should be widespread agreement, if not in the detail of this legislation, at least in the principle. Let those who think otherwise clearly state it for the record and be prepared to defend their actions to Manitobans.

When we were presenting the prebudget consultative meetings and listening to Manitobans across the province, we heard again and again from people in non-profits. I remember hearing from a woman who was in Swan River delivering services on—in the front line for a non-profit entity and asking me if we wanted her to be busy filling out forms in her office, that she had filled out six months ago, or if we wanted to release her to do what she had the passion and the expertise and the intellect and the desire to do, and that was to serve people in that non-profit

entity. She says: you have a choice, Minister; you can have me doing the work that I want to do, or I can be filling out forms in the office.

Now members of the opposition would suggest that there is no piece of regulatory accountability that is unnecessary, and I find the assertion absurd. And I understand that from—even today, the same comments were made again. We have application processors that require applicants to fill out entire forms, and I even heard one individual indicate that on filling the exact same form, year after year, with the exact same references attached each and every year, that, in one specific year, there was an oversight on their part and they failed to hand in the references that they had handed in arguably for 10 years previous. And there was a call, and there was an explanation: you've missed the deadline, you're application was incomplete, it lacked fundamental and critical information. The application was identical to the other years of funding. There was no quarrel with the content of the application. There was no quarrel with the applicant or the quality of the service rendered for the benefit of Manitobans. There was only a quarrel with the fact that, inadvertently, the references—the same references had been neglected to be received.

This individual responded and said, couldn't you just use the references that you have on file. No, you've missed the deadline, and there is no recourse and you've lost your funding.

Now let the members of the opposition say that that is the right thing to do. Let them say that common sense should not prevail. Let them say that in—that there should be no discussion that we should curtail even the discussion of, let's say, a multi-year application, that there could be evidence that is gauged on the basis on the quality of delivery of service. Maybe you would have a year-by-year application. But, after a two or three year period, there might be a movement to a multi-year approval.

This is just a hypothesis. What I'm saying is that, as a government, we are not ideologically opposed to doing things better. We know that non-profits, business, industry, agriculture, mining, Manitobans in their own households are not opposed to doing things better. Let those who would say they're opposed to those kinds of common sense changes to retiring regulatory requirements or put in the books 50 years ago that have no bearing, that have no enforcement, that have no natural point of reference anymore as society continues to modernize, let them

say that we must meet those conditions, that we must keep them on our books, that somehow it serves a purpose, that all legislation is sacrosanct and can never be questioned. But let them understand when they do that, that they don't follow best practice; that they're not following the example set by so many other provinces. It's unprincipled.

So we take not an ideological approach; we take a best-practice approach. We say there's things we can do better as a province, and we know it because we continue to hear the message delivered by those hard-working Manitobans who are building our economy.

We have seen recently that Manitoba's grade when it comes to regulatory accountability has started to inch up, and that's a helpful and hopeful sign, but much more work is needed to ensure that our province's regulatory system works, creates prosperity, relies on best practice, puts Manitobans to work, but the work that they want to be doing to grow this economy, to solve problems, to deliver services, to attend to the business that they know best and can deliver for us.

Bill 22 is the next logical step along the way. It will move Manitoba from being a laggard when it comes to regulatory accountability to be a leading province in Canada in regulatory 'accountability.' We want to ensure that the principles of transparency, effectiveness and efficiency are in this path forward. We want to help our province be more competitive, to improve the quality of our community services, to create prosperity for all Manitobans. To do this, our government will focus on managing regulatory requirements. These are the actions or steps that the province requires of non-profits, businesses, municipalities and private citizens in order to access government programs and services, participate in regulated activities or simply do business in the province. And I find that that is a helpful definition to bear in mind and the one that we have contained in this legislation.

Regulatory requirements are found everywhere in government. Statutes, regulations, an expansive range of policies and forms. So the first step to managing regulatory requirements has to do with knowing how many we have and where they are. When we formed government, the simple question of how many regulatory requirements we have in Manitoba couldn't be answered. That lack of accountability is simply unacceptable. That is why this bill requires government to establish and

maintain a comprehensive inventory of the number of regulatory requirements that exist and to publicly report that number on an annual basis. I think about one illustrative example whereby a few months ago, we had—we did an exercise where we brought the paperwork in, examples of the kind of paperwork that Manitobans face every day when they interact with government. And it was just an enormous volume of papers, an enormous volume of requirements that Manitobans have to wade through to do business.

So what—as a part of this transparent process, we also require that government forms and policies that contain regular accountability requirements are posted online, just like Manitoba statutes and regulations. All Manitobans should be able to easily find out what the rules are that they need to follow to live, work and to do business in the province.

We also heard Manitobans loud and clear when it comes to consultations on regulation. The previous government had a habit of springing regulatory requirements on stakeholders without warning and without cause, and I still remember many committee hearings where we would get to the bottom of a bill's provisions, and we would ask questions of those ministers about issues that seem to have been unresolved. And the answer was always the same: Those things will be addressed at the regulatory phase. These things will be addressed in regulation. Always the same answer: These things will be addressed in regulation.

* (16:20)

What we could not see, what was invisible to Manitobans, is that on the other side of that legislative process was a behemoth of a regulatory process: largely invisible but extremely restrictive in creating barriers to Manitobans. We need a better approach. These are exactly the kind of situations that create red tape and limit the ability to reach public policy goals.

And, going forward, all Manitobans will have that opportunity to review and comment on proposed regulations that contain regulatory requirements. That is efficient in the age of an Internet where we can have people know where to go to get the information, see what's proposed and then be able to comment back on those proposals. We all know the law of unintended consequences. And we all know that, even when there is the best intention, sectors can be faced with enormous hurdles that legislators, senior officials, departments did not anticipate.

While we're committed to stakeholder consultations, I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that nothing would beat that consistent posting of proposals online for comment back. It allows Manitobans to identify those unintended consequences before they occur.

The new system also ensures Manitoba complies with official notification obligations contained within provincial and international trade agreements. The lack of these checks and balances has allowed the administrative burden placed on Manitobans to flourish over the past 17 years.

A 2016 survey by the Institute of Citizen-Centred Service found that 53 per cent of all Manitoba entrepreneurs believe that the regulatory burden has increased in the past three years. According to the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, hundreds of millions of dollars is spent by entrepreneurs annually to comply with regulatory requirements that do not contribute to achieving public policy goals. In other words, it's not about safety, it's not about fairness; they're just following rules that were set out and then added to, and rules added to rules, and rules added to rules.

This growth of the administrative burden has to stop if we want to grow our economy and create greater prosperity for all of us. Among the proposals in the bill, Manitoba would be the first province to legislate a one-to-one requirement. That means for every new regulatory requirement that government wants to put on the books, an existing regulatory requirement with an equal or greater administrative burden must be removed. Our process would move from a two-to-one to one-to-one ratio to ensure that it is sustainable. We have consulted extensively with other provinces, with the federal government's own experience, and we can learn from their example. Until 2021, that more stringent two-to-one rule will be implemented to help keep that administrative burden down on non-profits, businesses, local governments and all Manitobans.

To be clear, these are not new ideas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. BC has maintained a similar system for years. In BC, rules similar to those in our proposed bill have been in place since 2001. And, as a result, BC has eliminated 157,000 regulatory requirements—a 47 per cent reduction in that burden. This has been done with no detriment to human health, no detriment to safety, no diminishment to the environment.

We also want to ensure that regulatory requirements are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are as effective and efficient as possible. Three years after they come into force, departments are mandated to tell the Legislature about these new requirements. We want to be transparent about what requirements work and which ones don't when it comes to achieving public policy goals.

By combining these concepts into a comprehensive legislative framework, Manitoba can create an effective, efficient and transparent regulatory system. The result of that system is reduced administrative burdens on business, non-profit, local government and increased prosperity for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to put these comments on the record. I look forward to the debate on this bill and to the opportunity to answer questions that may arise.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be answered in the—to the minister by any members of the following sequence: first the question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions may be asked by independent member, remaining questions asked by the opposition members. And no question shall exceed more than 45 seconds.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Why is the Finance Minister wantonly and proudly putting the health and safety of Manitobans at risk?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): The member for Fort Garry-Riverview does not surprise me by going immediately to fear. Most times he goes either to an allegation of incompetence or to try to incite fear. He really has no other message tracks.

If he would have listened to debate he would have noticed that I indicated that even in the province of BC, since 2001, that government has eliminated 157,000 regulatory requirements without any risk to health, safety or environment. Does he concern himself with what he would perceive as a problem with safety in BC? Because it has not been reported by media or anyone else.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask the minister, from what I can see, I don't find a penalty for the government for not achieving these goals, and the question is: Are these really going to be

meaningful? Is the government really going to carry them forward? Why is there no penalty for this government if this is such an important issue for them?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for the question and it's a good one.

His question is about accountability. It's why we would become the province that takes the strongest approach to red tape through legislation but also accountability measures like that central unit defined by the legislation being principally responsible for the progress of government. That, plus the reporting mechanisms, plus the annual report, plus the original count and the reductions thereafter, we feel will serve as the best mechanism to keep the eye of government on the ball of regulatory accountability and I would want to assure the member that there will be those provisions in place to serve all Manitobans and make sure government hits those targets.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Is the minister concerned that the red tape legislation his government has brought in will have adverse effects on Manitobans' drinking water and our environment?

Mr. Friesen: Actually, the member for St. Johns is incorrect in her assertion. The legislation that she refers to is not the one under debate right now, but, depending on the will of the House, we may get there yet this afternoon and, at that time, if we can get to the question period part of that discussion following the second reading remarks, I'm sure that the member for Sustainable Development may even attend and be able to answer directly to give that member the comfort that that bill is not actually about reducing but rather the strengthening of protections to water supply, especially for small sub-municipal suppliers of water systems.

Mr. Allum: Could the Finance Minister tell us how much his war on red tape is going to cost and how much red tape is it going to create?

Mr. Friesen: Well, actually, the member is asking all the wrong questions. As a matter of fact, what I would want to indicate to that member is, as I indicated in my remarks, that it is—it has actually been reported that entrepreneurs and sectors spend the equivalent of millions and millions of dollars per year because of the existence exactly of this regulatory burden that has gone unaddressed. That

member takes the approach that says we can't change anything, we can't evolve, we can't progress; all requirements are enshrined.

We don't take that approach; we are concerned about the amount of money that is spent because of this burden, and we intend to reduce it.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): There will need to be a big bureaucracy to implement this bill. Has the minister estimated the cost in time and dollars to implement the bill?

Mr. Friesen: It's a good question and I thank the member for that question.

She can appreciate that we will have—we're very motivated in ensuring that we can provide the best oversight to the policy that we want to bring without creating a huge bureaucracy in order to do it, and that is why we are able to actually fold in to this operation expertise by existing departments. Essentially, we have the capacity to do this now, in government, largely within our existing resources. What we need to do is align those resources in such a way as they serve our strategic goals. That will be done through this focus and through this strategy going forward.

* (16:30)

Ms. Fontaine: Does the minister believe that Manitobans care more about red tape reduction than cuts to their health care and education?

Mr. Friesen: Well, the member asks a puzzling question. I would respond to her that it is not a zero sum game and it is not an either or proposal. This government is committed to a health-care reform and keeping those resources. This government is committed to correcting the course when it comes to the educational legacy of last in all categories of the previous government. And at the same time, we will also address the very considerable and real issue of regulatory burden that Manitobans face, not only in general, in the general public, but also in the health field.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): My question is, how many new regulations will be required to implement this bill and how many existing regulations will have to be eliminated before this bill can be implemented?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the interim leader of the Liberal party for that question. And I would respond to her that, of course, government will first report that number of overall regulations and work down

from that number. I would assure her that government doesn't plan to create a huge new regulatory scheme out of the creation of this bill. This bill is exactly designed to do the opposite; to identify what is clearly a problem, to work from that problem towards solutions. And we invite all members to support that work that we know Manitobans are so eager to get to.

Mr. Allum: The Finance Minister feigns interest in evidence-based research. Can he tell us what evidence did he use to base his decision on this one-to-one equation he has? Why wasn't it 10-to-one or 100-to-one, or is he just making this stuff up?

Mr. Friesen: Well, first of all, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview is wrong in his assertion, it is not a feigned interest, it is a sustained and significant interest that we have in these matters. So he claims insincerity. I answer back that our efforts in this regard are sincere.

Why two-to-one and one-to-one evidence based, based on the experience of the Canada, based on the experience of BC, based on the experience of Saskatchewan, other provinces that have done this work we have invited their advice, we've listened to them.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister tell us why he is more concerned with regulations affecting his big business friends than protecting working Manitobans?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I dismiss the question, it's not accurate, it's unfair, it's designed to torque this debate. We don't want to torque debate. We want a real debate, a sincere one. I would invite the member to raise her own standards when it comes to these things. The member wants this kind of zero sum—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: She wants to put on the record somehow that government can't walk and chew gum. I want to assure that member that where her government failed to deliver results on health care and education we will succeed. And at the same time, we will also, with the support of all Manitobans, address the real and significant red tape hurdles that exactly the group she speaks about face trying to provide services to Manitobans.

Mr. Allum: It's been an interesting question and answer period with the Finance Minister. We ask questions, we don't get any answers.

Maybe we could just ask him if he would tell us why he's not undertaking this in an open and transparent way.

Mr. Friesen: I don't know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many times transparency and openness as concepts appear in the theme of this legislation. But I think that when you look at this bill, that comment can only betray that those members have not bothered to actually crack the binding on this bill, open it up and look inside. This is the most transparent, the most accountable, the most responsive method to reduce the regulatory burden that Manitobans face of any legislation of its kind. And I don't know what that member is referring to by that ill-advised comment.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to ask the minister a question about the implementation of the—of this bill when it passes because what—in our briefing, we were told that it's largely based on BC, and so I ask a question about the—what sort of computer programs would implement this program.

Now, as the member knows, SAP is the government's system that they have, and there's no module in SAP that I know of that would handle this particular bill. The question is: If he—is he going to be able to access the software necessary without spending millions of dollars developing a software program from the ground up?

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

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for Elmwood for that question, and I've heard him ask questions on SAP in this House before; we had some good exchanges in committee before where I know that member has indicated that some of the potential of SAP in the past has been underexplored by government, and I've actually accepted that counsel as the minister responsible for BTT. I've challenged my officials to see what else this platform can do for us.

An Honourable Member: Could take a long time.

Mr. Friesen: Yes.

In response to his specific question, we asked the same questions about the potential for SAP to deliver this in modules. We're thinking, based on our discussions with other jurisdictions, we would be better off; it would be a more cost-efficient mechanism to develop something that would deliver this potential and then interface with existing

computer systems. Not all of government runs on SAP.

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

Mr. Maloway: Well, that's the answer that I was hoping that he would never give me because the reality is that he's saying that SAP doesn't have a module; (b) they're going to have to develop a module unless they can borrow something from BC. But my experience with these software programs is they end up costing 10 times the initial price and they take years longer than—I mean, even the simple programs that are supposed to be done in a year, you know, end up taking two or three. So, I mean, if he thinks he's going to get this all done in his lifetime, he's got another thing coming.

Mr. Friesen: I'm not sure I perceived a question in the member's preamble, but I'll take this opportunity to say that that member is correct, that under the NDP, we're now aware of the fact, looking into matters, that many of their IT projects exceeded cost and didn't deliver results. I can give him the assurance that on this—if there is one benefit to the fact that the NDP dragged their feet so long on the issue of addressing this real challenge, it is that we can learn from the experience of other jurisdictions. We've done that homework. We have compared notes. We've listened well. We're learning as a result, and we believe that the system we'll build will be modest, will deliver results and will be—we have confidence in its ability to deliver what we need for the purposes of this program.

Mr. Maloway: Well, the minister is deluding himself when he believes that somehow it was an NDP issue with cost overruns at IT. I mean, I—all you have to do is take a look back to the Filmon government when they had a SmartHealth program that was, you know, millions and millions and millions of dollars over budget and took forever. IT overruns, cost overruns, have nothing to do with the NDP; they are consistent with all parties and all governments. It's just a fact of life, and the minister should be looking at an off-the-shelf program that has a—has been proven to be effective elsewhere. And I don't know that he has that outside of BC.

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

Mr. Friesen: It sounded more like a lecture than a question, but I will respond to the member by saying—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —let's take his argument to the end of where its trajectory leads it, which is he's saying that because it's going to mean some work, we shouldn't do it. We don't share that view. We have done the research. We believe that the approach that we are contemplating in this legislation will provide real results to Manitobans, will provide the accountability that is necessary and will provide a system to be able—to help us, as a province, track that regulatory requirement in a modest and reasonable way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

* (16:40)

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now it's time for debate.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Proud to get up and put a few words on the record regarding the regulatory accountability act put forward by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen). If one thing's become clear in this long afternoon of Q & A's and debate is that the Finance Minister clearly believes he's getting paid by the word and which may account for him talking so much. He's given himself such a hefty raise at the same time.

It goes without saying that this is yet another in a long line of ideological bills being presented by the Finance Minister that support his very right-wing, elitist approach to governing and cares little, very little, in fact, for the health and safety of Manitobans.

This bill, in particular, strikes us as comical, were it not such a colossal waste. There are many ways to refine and improve the regulatory foundation of Manitoba, if that's what you're set out to do, without embarking on a whole gigantic red tape exercise which this will certainly be. It's almost like, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a red tape witch hunt, in which the Finance Minister is going to leave no stone unturned in his search for red tape, and he's going to spend, as my friend from Elmwood just made it abundantly clear, millions of dollars in doing so. He's going to put public servants to work counting regulations over and over and over again, rather than actually having public servants do what they actually want to do, which is to serve the public and provide services that make life better for Manitobans.

It's quite obvious to us that the Finance Minister has unleashed a posse of public servants to go out and count, and endlessly count, regulations and then comes up with this arbitrary one-for-one thing, only to be outdone by his hero, I think, who is Donald Trump, who has gone to the two-to-one ratio. There's no evidence-based sensibility, no evidence-based foundation to this particular piece of legislation. It merely plays to a right-wing base that thinks that the world of regulation is designed to hamper their ability to make money.

And that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind everybody, it's really hard to listen to the speaker talk when everybody has their own conversation. So, if I can just get everybody to lower their conversation or go to the loge, I'd appreciate it. *[interjection]* Yes, the loge is full; I guess there's another one here.

But the honourable member for River Heights—Fort Garry-Riverview—the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum).

Mr. Allum: It's a funny thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you ask the rabble on the government side to try to be quiet, and they actually get louder. It's a—must—it's a remarkable—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. Allum: It's a remarkable chemical thing that seems to happen when asked to pay due respect to those on this side of the House. In fact, the members on the government side get louder. And I'm quite convinced that some of them have been given the job simply to be loud in the absence of having anything productive to actually do in this House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. Allum: It's quite a chorus that we have going. And I think it's—we have a chorus of loudness on the other side of the House. I know my friends on this side of the House, from the Tory side, the government side, are quiet and listening intently, and it's only across the way and the Finance Minister and the House leader seemingly finding reason to continuing talking.

The Finance Minister had an enormous—put an enormous number of words on the record already the vast majority of—not meaningful in any way. But I would hope that our ability to be able to speak to hold the government to account and to debate bills would not be hampered by members of the government side who seem to lack the ability to focus on the matters at hand and are more, for some reason, intent on interrupting a debate in the House. And, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, as New Democrats, we're interested in substantive debate on public policy.

We only wish that the government side would put substantive public policy on the agenda for us to debate—*[interjection]*—my friend from Fort Rouge says, why start now?

And that's true. They really seem to be distracted by the things that are unimportant to Manitobans. In the Manitoba that I live in, the city that I live in, Winnipeg, and the constituency of Fort Garry-Riverview where I live in, Manitobans care about the health and safety standards that ensure that they live healthy, safe lives at home, on the road, at work or anywhere else they might be.

And the Finance Minister has decided, at the behest of his buddies in the business community, that this isn't such a good idea and, in fact, there's money to be made through deregulation and there's money to be made by putting the health and safety of Manitobans at risk.

It will surprise you not at all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we don't agree with that approach. We would never be in agreement with that approach—*[interjection]*—as my friend from Fort Rouge says, echoing those distant voices of the CCF past, we always put people before profit.

And the Finance Minister is one of a long line of Tory Cabinet ministers provincially, federally, that put profits before people every single time, but it's not profit for all Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's profit for a very, very, few, and that's what his job is. His job is to go out and try to enrich the very few at the expense of the very many, and this is in a classic example of a government driven by an ideological zeal to ensure that the health and safety of Manitobans seems to be—want to put them at risk day in and day out. And yet the rich irony of this particular piece of legislation—my friend from Wolseley will talk later about the other red tape legislation, and I think all of us will want to speak on that—want to speak on it that will talk in specific

terms about some of the very egregious not red tape but in fact important health and safety standards that the government has already put on the table for chopping, and if this is an example of the kind of red tape reduction the Finance Minister has in mind, then he's doing the people of Manitoba a grave disservice, and he's going to, in fact, threaten the health and safety of families in our communities, of my family, of his family, of everyone's family.

* (16:50)

Why we would go back to that way of thinking is beyond explanation. But more than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think the rich irony of this particular piece of legislation is the bureaucracy and red tape it creates to eliminate bureaucracy and red tape to facilitate the co-ordination of initiatives and activities related to this, a regulatory free-for-all that the minister is engaged in. He's going to create the Regulatory Accountability Committee and the Regulatory Accountability Secretariat. Hmm, the Regulatory Accountability Committee and the Regulatory Accountability Secretariat, and who is going to be required to assist the Regulatory Accountability Committee and the Regulatory Accountability Secretariat? But any number of public servants who are going to have to spend their time serving these two committees about which we have really no explanation as to the difference between them, what one does, what the other one does. It's a mass of confusion for which there has been no explanation put forward by the Finance Minister, and, worse, he seems to have no sense that this is the amount of red tape he's actually creating in order to somehow undertake his red tape witch hunt that he's after.

You know, on this side of the House, and when we were on that side in the House, when we were governing, our objective was always to govern on behalf of the people of Manitoba all the time, all the people, all the time, day in, day out, every day. And, instead, what we have is a government that comes forward with an agenda that is strictly designed to serve the interests of the elites in our society.

An Honourable Member: One per cent.

Mr. Allum: The 1 per cent, as my friend from Tyndall Park reminds me. Maybe one and a half per cent, maybe tops two.

An Honourable Member: I think it's less, probably less, point zero one per cent.

Mr. Allum: My friend from Fort Rouge, quite rightly, points out to me it could well be less. It could be an even smaller group of people upon which this government is designed to serve at the expense of virtually every other Manitoban.

But I want to take us back to the Regulatory Accountability Committee and the Regulatory Accountability Secretariat, because they are mysteries wrapped in an enigma and a riddle, and it defies explanation as to the amount of energy, the amount of effort, the amount of time and the amount of people and the amount of money that's going to take in order to support this red tape witch hunt. It makes no sense.

My friend from Elmwood asked some very important, precise questions about the IT system—

Some Honourable Members: It doesn't exist.

Mr. Allum: —that will be required to undertake this, and, as my friend from Elmwood reminds me, that system doesn't exist at present, and you couldn't spend enough money to build it, quite likely. So it's not only a witch hunt; it's a witch hunt which has no place to go, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's going to run into a red tape wall and then it's going to fall down and it will have served the people of Manitoba no value whatsoever.

We, on this side of the House, took a much different approach to regulation. When we put legislation on the table, on the agenda of this House for debate and discussion, we always reviewed the regulations that were associated with legislation that it might be replacing, might be dealing with. And so what we were, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is we were laser focused on the regulations that no longer served any public interest or that had—were redundant or were just simply not useful going in to the future and we dealt with them at that time and we dealt with them as we should. As one piece of legislation came along, and then another piece of legislation came along, we made sure that there was a comprehensive view of the worldview of the entire legislation, so we handled it from that way of dealing with it.

There are any many other ways to be efficient in dealing with regulation that may well not be required any more or may have served their purpose, and you don't need a Regulatory Accountability Committee and you don't need a Regulatory Accountability Secretariat or the vast number of public servants to do the bidding of the committee and the secretariat or the vast amount of money it's going to take in order

to support the public servants who are supporting the secretariat and the committee to do this.

This is a crazy, crazy plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has really no basis in reality and is really only designed, sadly, to satisfy the base in the Conservative Party who wants to make money by putting the health and safety of Manitobans at risk.

And it would be no surprise that we would never—we would never—support any undertaking that would take Manitoba, government of Manitoba, this great province, down that path. That's why we're here, and we have a stiff backbone on that. We're not going to roll over for this kind of ideological nonsense that's being put to us by the Minister of Finance. We're quite prepared to stand up to it, but we also know that they have this kind of legislation in place to try to distract Manitobans from what is quite concretely the real agenda, which is an 'agendi'—agenda of austerity—that's the plural of agenda, 'agendi.' I just made that up.

An Honourable Member: Oh, you humanized it.

Mr. Allum: I did humanize that, actually; thank you from my friend from Wolseley for helping me to make my way through this afternoon of speaking.

An Honourable Member: With friends like that.

Mr. Allum: Yes, I'm so proud to be surrounded by such great friends and colleagues who support me in my endeavours to hold the government to account every step of the way.

But, as I was trying to point out, we're not going to roll over for this kind of legislation that serves as a distraction from the real agenda of this government, which is one of austerity, one of cuts, one of rolling Manitoba back to a time—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —we'd rather not return to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just want to have the noise quiet so we can continue and have the speaker continue what he's saying.

The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum).

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One of the things that this government puts a premium on, besides enriching themselves and enriching their friends in the business community at the expense of every other Manitoban, is this sort of preoccupation with the notion of efficiency, and yet the Finance Minister had tabled a bill that is remarkably inefficient in how it's constructed, how it's designed and how it will be implemented. And that tells us that, in fact, there wasn't significant amount of thought put into a bill like this. This was pulled from the Tory playbook that has been used far and wide by governments that are remarkably right wing in how they approach public policy.

An Honourable Member: The Republican playbook?

Mr. Allum: The—from—yes, they might have even borrowed it from the very thin Republican playbook. It's not like these are thick playbooks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These are very thin playbooks.

An Honourable Member: Deregulation, vote suppression, and the corporate giveaways.

Mr. Allum: Yes, deregulation, vote suppression, says my friend from Fort Rouge, and privatization and corporate giveaways.

It's the kind of agenda that Canadians are tired of. It's the kind of agenda that Manitobans didn't think that they were getting when they elected this government, and the reason they didn't think that is because the government itself came out with a very minimalist election campaign, didn't say anything that they'd be making these atrocious cuts to health care, that they would be making atrocious cuts to education, that they would be making atrocious cuts to infrastructure jobs, thereby impairing job creation in this province and thereby putting into doubt the very well-being of Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I'm not surprised that already, less than a year—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When this matter's before the House, the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview will have approximately 11 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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