

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*

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 11, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development

Fourth Report

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): 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 Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 10, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Repeal Act/Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la Commission manitobaine d'aménagement de la route située du côté est*
- **Bill (No. 7)** – *The New West Partnership Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur la mise en œuvre de l'Accord commercial du nouveau partenariat de l'Ouest*

(modification de diverses dispositions législatives)

Committee Membership

- *Mr. ALLUM*
- *Mr. BINDLE*
- *Hon. Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Mr. MALOWAY*
- *Mr. MICHALESKI*
- *Hon. Mr. PEDERSON*
- *Mr. SMOOK (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. WHARTON*
- *Mr. WOWCHUK*

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

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on Bill (No. 7) – The New West Partnership Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur la mise en œuvre de l'Accord commercial du nouveau partenariat de l'Ouest (modification de diverses dispositions législatives):

Jonathan Alward, Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Repeal Act/Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la Commission manitobaine d'aménagement de la route située du côté est*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 7)** – *The New West Partnership Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur la mise en œuvre de l'Accord commercial du nouveau partenariat de l'Ouest (modification de diverses dispositions législatives)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

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

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron 249— 50th Anniversary

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Madam Speaker, this year, 2017, marks the 50th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron 249. To commemorate this event, the 249's 50th Anniversary Annual Ceremonial Review Graduation Parade will take place on Saturday, June 10th, 2017, commencing from the Sun Gro Centre in Beausejour and will be followed by a dinner and banquet at the Beausejour rec centre for all the cadets and their families to attend.

On April 26th, 1967, the Air Cadet Squadron 249 received their official certification charter. Since that time, the 249 squadron continues to provide a vital service to the Lac du Bonnet constituency by giving back to our communities through volunteerism and citizenship activities.

The cadet program was established to develop and prepare our youth by providing them with the knowledge and the skills they require as they approach adulthood and enabling them to become the leaders of tomorrow. Through a variety of fun and challenging activities cadets are motivated to become better citizens by encouraging both physical and academic improvement while developing an increased level of self-confidence. The Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron 249 is a true example of the success of the cadet program.

I would like to take this opportunity, as well, Madam Speaker, to thank the parents' committee, commanding officer Captain Cindy Buss, Lieutenant Myles Drynan and all the other supporting officers and parents who contribute their time and effort towards many—towards my community and the development of our youth.

I ask that all members join me in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Royal Air Cadet Squadron 249 and take pride in the promise of a better future for our youth.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Seven Oaks ER Closure

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I received a letter this week from a nurse who lives in my constituency who has worked at the Seven Oaks General Hospital for 30 years. She shared her concerns with the government's reckless cuts to its ER. She described the mood of health-care workers at Seven Oaks, saying it has left the staff angry, full of uncertainty, anxious and confused, making for a disruptive work environment, not only in the ER, but throughout the facility.

She goes on to say: I feel for my colleagues at both HSC and St. Boniface who struggle daily to provide safe care to their patient population, and now they are expected to pick up the load from three other ERs? In the past when HSC has been overburdened with critically ill patients, they put on what is called a red redirect. Seven Oaks has always been there at those times to pick up the workload of critically ill patients HSC cannot provide for. Where will these patients be redirected now?

Madam Speaker, this is a front-line worker who feels abandoned by her government.

Our NDP caucus wants to tell this nurse and others that we are listening and that we want their health-care services protected and that we know shutting down ERs is not the way to improve efficiency in our emergency health-care system in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Kennedy Baker

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): The spirit of entrepreneurialism and ingenuity is alive and well in Agassiz, and nowhere is that more apparent than amongst our next generation of business leaders.

Today in this Legislature, we're thankful to be joined by Kennedy Baker and her family from Neepawa, along with representatives from True North Sports & Entertainment.

For Kennedy, what started as an idea has grown into a promising new partnership and business opportunity.

Kennedy has always had a very artistic side, and her new venture has created an opportunity to share her love for painting and drawing with others. She came across a pair of shoes decorated with the logo for the old Vancouver Millionaires NHL team. When

she couldn't find a place to buy herself a pair, she decided to make a pair. And from there the business idea of translating art onto shoes was born.

She was one of the four prizewinners at the What's the Big Idea entrepreneurship competition last fall, and when her mom posted a picture of her shoes on social media, she caught the eye of True North Sports & Entertainment, one of Manitoba's most iconic corporations. Before she knew it, she was at their offices in Winnipeg to present her shoes in person.

* (13:40)

That meeting ended with a purchase order, and the first Winnipeg-Jets-themed pair of XK 10 designs was sold at the Jets game that very same night.

Now, with her partners at True North, XK 10 designs is looking ahead to even bigger opportunities.

Madam Speaker, with so many young people like Kennedy Baker who are not afraid to show leadership, take risks and pursue their dreams, I know that our future of the province of Manitoba's in very good hands.

On behalf of the Manitoba Legislature, we thank Kennedy for her hard work, and we thank her family for their support, and we thank her partners of True North for their vision and for their confidence in young Manitoba leaders like Kennedy Baker.

I ask you to please stand and welcome them to the Legislative Building today.

Grant's Old Mill Museum

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Grant's Old Mill Museum and St. James Assiniboia Pioneer Association. Spring is here in Manitoba, which opens the doors on Winnipeg's historic landmarks for the season.

Grant's Old Mill Museum has been a meeting place for the community for St. James-Assiniboia for—and Kirkfield Park—for many, many years. It's a popular place for everyone to meet, whether it be seniors, whether it be families, to have a picnic or barbecue. That's a part of it.

The mill and museum is on the banks of the Sturgeon Creek near the corner of Portage Avenue and Booth Drive. Made of logs brought from the Whiteshell in 1975, Grant's Old Mill was constructed

in the way that it was intended to in 1829: all tongue and groove and without nails. The idea of the restoration of Grant's Old Mill and watermill on Sturgeon Creek was first conceived by the St. James Assiniboine seniors group that received a community grant for the project.

The mill is named after Cutler [*phonetic*] Grant Jr., who operated the first watermill west of the Great Lakes. It provided a glimpse of the real working mill. They operate the mill—they operate the flour of the mill using solid granite millstones to demonstrate how and where in terms of this approach can take since the 19—or the 1980s.

They teach the history of Cutler [*phonetic*] Grant, the fur trade and the fur-trade wards in the early 1800s. Grant is considered, of course, the first leader of the Metis nation. Grant salvaged the grindstones and transported them to Grantown and built in a—in windmill which served the needs of the Metis settlement for many, many years.

Today, the mill is recognized and is donated by a number of agencies and organizations including Paterson Grain and also can contribute to produce upwards of 1,000.

We have members of the mill that are here and—in terms of their executive. Ken and Nancy Fluto who are in our crowd, I want to thank you for all your hard work, your dedication with the mill. The mill does have two different events that happen throughout the year, Grant Cutler [*phonetic*] day, which is the second Saturday, July, and the Pioneer Picnic that happens on the second Saturday in August.

Thank you very much for all your work, and I do want to recognize them. They are here.

Misericordia Urgent Care Centre

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I speak today about the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre.

I will start with the decision by the former Conservative government in the late 1990s to close Misericordia Hospital, a hospital with a long tradition of providing great care to the community. Misericordia Hospital at that time had excellent orthopedic surgery. In fact, under wise management and with use of new, then-made-in-Manitoba technology, the management was so good that they not only provided excellent care, they also came in substantially under budget.

As an award for achieving that excellence, the then-Tory government closed the program, sending a strong message: don't aspire to do great things in Manitoba for you will be shut down. It was a sad day. But the then-Tory government was quickly thrown out of office.

Out of the ashes of the hospital rose the urgent care centre. The community raised money. Many—myself among them—dressed up as angels just before Christmas to support the cause. The community rallied round.

The urgent care centre provided superb care. I have been there on occasion myself. The service and the care were excellent. Indeed, though I have been inundated with concerns about care in other areas of our health-care system, I have never received a single complaint about the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre.

It was so good, and now as a reward it is being cut by the current government.

Today, my comments may be the requiem for a departing centre of excellent health care. More hopefully, perhaps, there is still an opportunity to persuade the present government that the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre should stay open.

We as a community will do our best to put forward the view we all believe in: that the mistakes of the past should not be revisited. The Misericordia Urgent Care Centre should stay open.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Lieutenant Commander Fitzgerald, Regional Cadet Support, and Lieutenant Myles Drynan of the Royal Air Cadet Squadron 249 out of Beausejour who are the guests of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Affordability for Students Elimination of Tax Credit

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today's budget is going to hit young people the hardest. Students have already been hit with frozen minimum wage and then the prospect of skyrocketing tuition. Now the government has

announced that they will be chopping the student tuition rebate.

Will the Premier be redirecting the full amount of the funds cut from the rebate toward supports that keep life affordable for Manitoba students?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, under the previous administration we saw a doubling of our provincial debt in just a few short years. And, of course, when the member references respect for young people that is not a respectful thing to do to young people, to pass—to pay it backwards, so to speak. To pass on a massive debt obligation to those who have yet had the opportunity to pay taxes or to experience the joys of living in this beautiful province is not a responsible thing to do. It's an irresponsible thing to do, and it's what the previous administration was doing.

And so we ran and asked for a mandate from Manitobans to fix the finances of the province after a decade of debt and, Madam Speaker, that is precisely what we will do.

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

Ms. Marcelino: We have heard from students, Manitoba students and parents, and they have told us that they are deeply concerned that the cost of post-secondary education is becoming a debt sentence—d-e-b-t.

We disagree fundamentally with the government's decision to allow tuition to skyrocket. And now the Premier has decided to cancel tax rebates that put thousands of dollars into the hands of students starting out in life.

Madam Speaker, with the costs mounting for students, how is the Premier going to keep life affordable for young Manitobans, and will his budget include actual tracking of affordability for Manitoba families?

Mr. Pallister: I thank the member for any question that uses the word affordability, Madam Speaker.

There was no concern about affordability when the previous government was jacking up the taxes on families, jacking up the taxes on car owners, jacking up the taxes on people who needed to buy fuel, raising the taxes on people who needed to insure their homes, increasing the taxes on people who work on their benefits at work. No, Madam Speaker, there was nothing respectful about that approach, in

fact, that saw Manitobans pay the highest increase in taxes of any Canadians.

So, Madam Speaker, when they speak today about respect for students they really miss the point, or at least they missed the point when they were in government.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier forgot that Manitoba has the lowest utility bundle in the country.

* (13:50)

Madam Speaker, we know that the tax changes the Premier made last year left only enough for low-income earners with enough money to buy one lunch, while giving large returns to the wealthy.

Students deserve continued support, instead they have seen the minimum wage frozen, skyrocketing tuition, and now tens of thousands of dollars in tax rebates have been cancelled that students can rely on when making the decision to pursue a degree.

Madam Speaker, if the Premier is going to rip up this particular benefit for students, will his budget introduce new benefits for students that equal the amount that he is cutting?

Mr. Pallister: As we know, the record of the previous government's well understood by Manitoba families who had to pay all these increased taxes, including a PST which they themselves went to the doors of the people of Manitoba and promised they would not raise, Madam Speaker, and then went further and went to court and fought against Manitobans having the chance to even vote on it—they raised that tax, as well. So raiding the kitchen tables of Manitobans, something the previous administration was very good at.

What we've done is, of course, we've raised the basic personal exemption to leave more money in the hands of Manitoba families. We've indexed the tax—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —brackets to inflation so that no longer can governments raid the incomes of Manitobans in that manner. And we're focusing on making sure the barriers to post-secondary education and training are lower—not raised as they were under the previous administration, but lower.

And, Madam Speaker, that is the key, because there was no demonstrated improvement in the graduation rates, for example, of young indigenous men and women in our province during their time in office; in fact, a decline in that.

And, Madam Speaker, progress is what we're after. Reducing the barriers to post-secondary education and training is a key part of achieving that progress in this province.

Privatization of Public Services Employment Loss Concerns

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): You know, the Premier needs to get his facts right, or at least he needs to hire a fact checker, because he gets them wrong every single day.

Over the weekend, the Finance Minister floated yet another trial balloon on the privatization of public services. And not only when you privatize public services do you turn public services into private profit, but front-line workers lose their jobs.

So I want to ask the Premier today: Has he calculated how many jobs are going to be lost as a result of his fixation on privatization?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, I don't have any trouble. It's the members who are trying to deny their own past, not me.

I'm simply saying the members opposite raised the PST after promising not to. The member needs to—actually, he could do some research himself on that and he might find out that that's a true statement, an actual fact.

They said it was—what did they call it—ridiculous, nonsense, that they would raise it. They ran the whole campaign in the election on not raising it, and then they went out and raised it after they'd looked everybody right in the eye at their doorstep and promised them they wouldn't—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —right in the eye.

So, what are the facts about privatization?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the members opposite privatized—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: –the land titles branch and they privatized Manitoba Hydro by giving 25 per cent of the ownership of a dam away to private interests. And they privatized medicine, two-tier medicine, by making people wait so long they gave up and went and pursued private sector options in North Dakota and Minnesota.

Those are the facts for the member opposite.

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

Mr. Allum: That's a bit rich coming from a Premier who looked public servants in the eye and made a solemn pledge to protect front-line services, and every single day he gets up and says he's going to privatize it.

So I want to ask the Premier right now, right here in front of all of these folks that are in the gallery today: What privatized services are on the agenda? How many people are going to lose their jobs? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: I understand that the member is afraid, Madam Speaker. I do. I understand that he's afraid and I understand that he and the Cabinet members who preceded this government were fearful of acting on the advice they were given by experts within their own government departments to pursue progressive change. They were fearful of the political consequences, for example, of improving health care—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Pallister: –in the province of Manitoba. They were given advice that the wait times could be shortened, but they said, no, we're not going to shorten those wait times because it'd be too challenging and too difficult.

Madam Speaker, governments that only worry about getting re-elected don't get re-elected, nor should they. Governments that act on the advice and the science and the research of capable and knowledgeable people, including front-line workers in the system, such as this government, deserve to get re-elected and will.

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

Mr. Allum: Madam Speaker, we can only take the Premier at his word. He looked public servants in the eye, he looked the people of Manitoba in the eye

and say he would protect front-line services and front-line workers, and he's not doing it.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health, in talking about privatization, says everything's on the table. Minister of Education says that he's going to privatize education capital in this province.

So, what we want to know today, it's a simple question: How many public servants are going to lose their jobs because of his fixation on privatization?

Madam Speaker: I would ask everybody's indulgence, please. We are only on our second question, and I would ask that everybody please try to restrain the heckling. We have an opportunity here. We've got a lot of guests in the gallery, so we should be showing some respect for the people that are asking and answering the questions, and I would ask everybody's indulgence in that, please.

Mr. Pallister: The tired ideological battles of the past are ones the member wants to continue to engage in. What we are interested in is improving results for Manitobans. We inherited a decade of debt, Madam Speaker, and we are going to fix the finances of this province. We inherited a decade of decay where we had the longest wait times, the worst educational outcomes, the highest child poverty rate in the country, and we are committed—we are committed—to restoring the social services of the people of this province.

Madam Speaker, we inherited a decay in our economic growth where we were second last in the country, and now we are going to find progress, not on the basis of ideology, because it isn't an ideology—it isn't an ideological thing to have faith in the people of Manitoba. That's something this government has; it's something, apparently, the members opposite do not have.

Agriculture Producers Funding Act Farmers Choice in Representation

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, under the agricultural producers funding act of Manitoba, only one qualified organization can be certified at any one time.

Madam Speaker, this government proclaims that it wants to defend the choice of Manitobans, but it hasn't given that choice to farmers. When the Minister of Agriculture announced the review of Manitoba's stable funding formula, the review did

not foresee the ability of more than one farm organization representing farmers.

Will the minister confirm that the review of the act will examine whether more than one farm organization can represent farmers?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): It's a pleasure to have my critic get up and ask me a question in regard to agriculture; it seems like six months.

Of course, we've reached out to all Manitobans, unlike the previous government. We make sure we get it right. We consult with those that need to be in. In fact, we meet with all farm organizations, and stay tuned for more, going forward, on this legislation.

* (14:00)

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

Mr. Lindsey: It's no wonder I don't ask him many questions.

Madam Speaker, if this government wants to protect the rights of farmers to choose who represents them, they should provide that opportunity for farmers. They should give farmers the choice to decide for themselves—for themselves—which organization best represents their interests.

Other provinces offer this democratic freedom to farmers: Will the government ensure that farmers have the choice as to who represents them?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: I would ask members again to please restrain the heckling. I am having a little bit of difficulty hearing the words that are asked and responded to, and in order for me to make any rulings, it's important that I hear all of the comments that are made. So, out of respect for this Chair, I hope that I can beg your indulgence and we can get through the questions and answers today in good time.

Mr. Eichler: Well, I'm glad the Premier (Mr. Pallister) didn't get up on that one. It's another lob question that kind of got thrown out there. It was one of those easy ones.

Of course, we do believe in consultation, something the member just talked about. But talk about choice, choice for fishermen, choice for farmers. We'll stand with our farmers each and every

day. We won't mislead Manitobans, like the members opposite.

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

Mr. Lindsey: The government seems to be consistent. They do not think it's up to workers to decide for themselves who will represent their interests. They don't think it's up to farmers to decide who will represent them.

Madam Speaker, I table this petition from the Manitoba farmers requesting that they be given the choice in who represents them.

Will this government give farmers the choice that they want?

Mr. Eichler: I appreciate the question.

And, of course, we did an online survey just recently. We're tabulating those results. All Manitobans, all farmers, had an opportunity to reach out and explain what they might want to see in the farm organizations.

We'll base our decisions on results, not on fiction made up by some petition that he decided to make up one day.

MMIWG National Inquiry Development of Liaison Unit

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): In the last couple of months, the families of Christine Wood, Shania Chartrand, Tiffany Skye and Jeanenne Fontaine now join thousands of other families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls across Canada in mourning their daughters, their mothers, their sisters, their friends.

It is yet another tragic reminder of the importance of the national inquiry. However, as the inquiry gets under way, there is still no clue as to what this Province is doing in supporting families in further preventing trauma.

Did the Province apply for federal dollars for the development of a national inquiry family information liaison unit? And, if so, can the minister provide an update on its establishment, including, when can families expect to hear from this government?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for the question.

And, of course, we—our heart goes out to the Wood family and to, indeed, all those families who have lost loved ones over so many years.

And, certainly, with respect to the family liaison units, that has been put in place. We've, in fact, sent a letter, a joint letter between myself and the Minister for Indigenous and Municipal Relations, to the federal government to ask what the next steps are. That was some time ago. We have yet to hear back. We have been following up. We are waiting to hear from the federal government as to what steps are next in this process.

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

Information for Families

Ms. Fontaine: While the national inquiry has begun some of its work, there are still lacks of engagement with family members, which still has created so much stress and anxiety for MMIWG families. Details about upcoming hearings are vague and officials haven't clearly explained to families what their role will be in the hearings.

For families in northern Manitoba with reliable—without reliable Internet service, they aren't able to access the inquiry's website for updates and are instead asking for updates through radio or through direct contact with this government.

What exactly is this government doing in working with MMIWG families, ensuring that families are fully engaged in the national inquiry and including getting the information disseminated to them?

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, I want to thank the member for the question.

And there is ongoing consultation and so on with those families as a result of the MMIWG inquiry. I stated earlier that we have sent a letter to the federal government asking for direction, asking for what the process is moving forward here. It's very unclear what we can expect moving forward.

It's absolutely crucial that we work together as Manitobans on this file to ensure that proper direction is given by the federal government and we hope they come forward with that very soon.

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

Government Intentions

Ms. Fontaine: I'm not sure who the minister is saying that she's consulting with in respect of MMIWG families because no matter who I speak to in the community with community agencies and MMIWG families, no one has heard from this government.

I spoke with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs this morning who shared they still haven't heard anything from this government and are really wanting to know what the government's plan is, or strategy in respect of prevention dollars combatting violence against indigenous women and girls.

I'd like to list all the other agencies I've spoken with, but, honestly, Madam Speaker, everyone is terrified to draw any attention to themselves because they're scared of this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) cuts or so-called pauses.

Like, honestly, what is this government doing in respect of MMIWG?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank the member opposite for the question.

Since we were appointed to our positions in May of last year, I actually went to the communities and visited with families, families that have never been spoken to before even though there was a liaison person and a person that—indicating that they were doing a lot of work.

We will be working in partnership, as the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) indicated, with the inquiry, with other stakeholders in Winnipeg as well as the province of Manitoba ensuring that the members of families are heard and that we work simultaneously to ensure that there are positive outcomes in the future.

UCN Dental Assistant Program Cancellation of Program

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): The University College of the North has had a national accredited dental assistant program for more than 25 years. Recently, under this government, that program was cancelled, further decreasing opportunities for people in the North.

Can the Minister for Education explain to Manitobans why they made this ill-advised decision?

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

As she should know, colleges and universities are independent of the government and make their decision on courses that are available in each community based on local demand, and I am sure that they did a thorough job of reviewing the potential in that community for that course before any cancellation was done.

But they do move them around on a regular basis. Perhaps the member should contact the institution directly.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Many First Nations, Aboriginal communities and other remote communities are in a state of oral health crisis, partly due to a lack of trained front-line workers. Cutting the UCN dental assistant program is only going to contribute to that crisis.

Will the government reconsider its decision and restore the funding to the UCN dental assistant program?

*(14:10)

Mr. Wishart: I would repeat that the local institutions, the colleges themselves make the decision as to where they offer the courses and in what year. No funding has been removed from the University College of the North related to that particular course, and, certainly, I would encourage the member to contact the University College of the North and express her concern about the lack of demand—or the lack of the course. But I'm sure it reflects a lack of demand in the community from people that wish to take the course.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The cost of education is expected to increase by 2 per cent this year. The government is not keeping up with the inflation and the growing demands in the education system. Their decision to allow universities and colleges to increase tuition and the cancellation of northern health clinics and the UCN dental program are only going to make it more difficult in northern Manitoba.

How can northerners see this as anything other than a sign that this provincial doesn't care about northern Manitoba?

Mr. Wishart: Our government is more than aware of the difficulties faced by rural and remote

communities when it comes to getting their students out for the education that they so justly deserve. We—that's why we have made changes to the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative to improve the amount of money available to students from \$4 million, under the previous government, to \$20 million.

Seven Oaks Hospital Future Employment Concerns

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): The facts state that Seven Oaks hospital is consistently the highest performing emergency department by almost any metric. This is a hospital that, apart from the Health Sciences Centre, sees more people per day than any other hospital in Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, in the game of hockey, the coaches always make sure that their outstanding stars get lots of time spent out on the ice: Why is this government making the workers at Seven Oaks hospital feel as if they're getting benched?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, to use the hockey analogy, the problem is, when it comes to wait times around the city of Winnipeg, we were like the minor leagues compared to other places in Canada. We were the worst in Canada, 10th out of 10, under the former NDP government.

Now, maybe the member opposite—and I hope it's not true—wanted us just to continue on and do the same thing that the previous government did and pour billions of dollars into a broken system. We decided to do something different. We were listening to experts. We're acting on their advice. And we're going to make things better, Madam Speaker.

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

Emergency Room Wait Times Vancouver Model of Care

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, the Pallister government has chosen to ignore a key recommendation. This recommendation is clear, and for the House's reference, it's on—it's found on page 61 of the Peachey report. It reads that the three remaining emergency departments should be expanded to allow for a greater volume of patients.

The government is trying to mirror models of ERs such as the one found in Vancouver. But, Madam Speaker, the minister must know that this

model is much, much larger in comparison to Winnipeg's ERs.

Why is this government skipping a very important step recommended in the Peachey report that is crucial to eliminating wait times?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I certainly commend the member for getting to page 61, unlike the member for Wolseley who couldn't get to page 62, yesterday, of the report, Madam Speaker.

And she's absolutely right. There needs to be expansion in emergency rooms in Winnipeg. And that's why we're expanding the Grace emergency room.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: We were told that these decisions being made to our health-care system was based on evidence, yet there has been absolutely zero evidence provided to the House today.

If this government wants to use Vancouver's emergency department as an example to work towards, then they can't skip steps and leave important facts out.

Madam Speaker, emergency departments would have to be expanded before cutting them from the community hospitals.

And this government has to consider transportation in these big changes. Vancouver has rapid transit, which makes it much easier to get around compared to here in Winnipeg.

When will the minister share with us the evidence behind these health-care changes?
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the evidence was put online several weeks ago. The Peachey report was released publicly. Also released was the Manitoba health centre for institute research into the wait times within the ERs. That evidence is publicly available, open for every member to read.

We already indicated we'll be expanding the emergency room at the Grace Hospital. There won't be a transition from Concordia until the Grace ER is open, and I would hope that she would talk to her interim leader, who on Friday quickly went to Twitter after the announcement and endorsed

the plan and said we should bring it right across Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Expansion of Trade Support for Manitobans

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli): Madam Speaker, in my riding of Gimli there are many businesses and industry that would benefit from selling their products both inside and outside of Manitoba. That's why our government has made trade a priority.

Could the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade inform the House on the work that has been done to help Manitobans sell more of their products?

Thank you.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I certainly appreciate the question on the economy.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, Manitoba is a trading province. We rely on trade to grow our economy and put Manitobans to work. We have signed the New West Partnership legislation to formalize our requirements—passed second reading just last night.

Additionally, we have signed the new Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Manitoba took—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Cullen: Manitoba has taken the most ambitious stance and approach of any province or territory. 'Threse' agreements will allow Manitobans to move goods and services across borders more easily. This will create jobs for Manitobans and will reduce regulatory burden faced by many.

Madam Speaker, these are important steps on our road to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Electric Transportation Government Plan

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): With the year 2016 being the warmest for global temperatures ever recorded since the Industrial Revolution, what is this minister's plan to electrify our transportation networks in Manitoba?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): Like to—thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

We are, in fact, developing a made-in-Manitoba climate action plan. Unlike the members opposite,

who failed to consult with Manitobans and just unilaterally looked at a cap-and-trade system, we will talk to Manitobans. We're going to develop a plan based on their suggestions and their recommendations, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: To help the minister and this government actually perhaps make any announcement on climate change, I held, several months ago, an initiative that had support of my colleagues, which I'm very grateful for, on how we could provide no-interest loans to Manitobans and to municipal transit fleets so that they could electrify their transportation grid and reduce our emissions and save money.

I'm pleased to table the results of that survey, and I would invite the minister to review this and perhaps commit to implementing this as part of that plan she referenced.

Mrs. Cox: Thanks to the member opposite.

Members opposite had 17 years to adopt this project that he's talking about and referencing. You know, we're not going to take any suggestions from them. We're going to listen to Manitobans. We're going to get it right. We're going to develop a plan that addresses the initiatives that we're taking to address climate change, and, you know, we'll listen to Manitobans and get it right.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Not to put too fine a point on it, Madam Speaker, but for a minister of the Crown to unilaterally declare that an entire group of people are not worth listening to is not the kind of leadership that Manitobans are looking for.

* (14:20)

As she can see from the results that I just publicly tabled—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —37 different constituencies are represented in the survey results. Over 100 people responded, 93 per cent of them are in favour of this idea. It looks to me like this merits investigation, and if she isn't willing to be listening to our ideas, will

she at least be accountable for the survey that she has put out and table similar results when she's done looking at those?

Mrs. Cox: Thanks to the member opposite. I'm glad that he has had 100 responses to his project.

We, in fact, have had thousands and thousands of responses to our survey. We believe in listening to Manitobans. We've been out talking to Manitobans, stakeholders, non-government organizations in developing a climate action plan that is going to suit Manitoba, is going to be right for Manitoba.

They will drive the process Manitoba not—
Madam Speaker, not just 100 individuals on this project.

Neighbourhoods Alive! Program Funding Commitment Inquiry

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Since 2000, the Neighbourhoods Alive! program has helped communities across Manitoba find effective local solutions for a number of issues including public safety.

Has this Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) spoken up for communities to ensure the Neighbourhoods Alive! program is protected in today's budget?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank the member opposite.

I think this is a good time to acknowledge not just the Neighbourhoods Alive! program, but several other programs in our province that are helping our communities and our neighbourhoods, and we look forward to working with these organizations and providing Manitobans with the best services possible going forward.

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

Mr. Swan: This Minister of Justice is ducking a very simple, but a very important question for many communities.

Not only is she responsible for public safety, I understand that she's a member of Treasury Board and had the ability to advocate for the Neighbourhoods Alive! program.

The relatively small provincial investment leverages funds to revitalize communities across the province, especially neighbourhoods in the heart of

Brandon, Winnipeg and many other Manitoba cities and towns.

I ask again: Has this Minister of Justice spoken up for communities to ensure that today's budget will protect the Neighbourhoods Alive! program?

Ms. Clarke: I would like the opposite member to know that we had an excellent meeting less than three weeks ago with several managers and other people that work with the Neighbourhoods Alive! programs throughout the province of Manitoba. It was a great meeting, and we shared information as to the work that they do across the province, and they were very satisfied with the outcome of the meeting.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, I agree that they are great people. But they are frightened of what's going to happen in this Chamber in just an hour from now.

Thanks in large part to listening to and empowering people who live in Neighbourhoods Alive! communities, crimes have been cut in half since the Neighbourhoods Alive! program began. Yet project funding was frozen last year without any consultation with the organizations who receive the grants or any of the communities that benefit from them. Some still hope the Minister of Justice will be prepared to stand up for community safety in the face of these cuts.

Will the Minister of Justice speak up, or will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) instead silence her so he can continue his pattern of personal attacks on inner-city MLAs?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Manitoba—the NDP left us on track to a \$1.7-billion deficit, Madam Speaker, without dealing with the very issues that the member opposite is talking about, about community safety, of which we care about very much on this side of the House. That's why we're working with police officers. That's why we're working with sheriff officers. We're working with correctional officers. We're working with all stakeholders within our criminal justice system to ensure the safety and security of Manitobans.

We're here to clean up the mess of members opposite. We're committed to doing that. We're on the road to recovery right here in Manitoba.

Livestock Industry Support for Growth

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Madam Speaker, livestock industry plays a key role in our economy, especially in my riding of Arthur-Virden. The Minister of Agriculture has been working hard to ensure that this needs for producers are being heard.

Could the Minister of Agriculture please inform the House on what is being done to support the growth in the livestock sector?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Yes, unlike the previous NDP government, with a projected deficit of \$1.7 billion and halting livestock growth, we are focusing on fixing our finances, repairing our services, rebuilding our economy by growing our livestock sector, reducing red tape, protecting our environment and making sure we're the most improved province in all of Canada.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

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

The taxi industry is regulated to ensure there are both the provision 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 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 was no consultation 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' has—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 as follows:

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

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

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

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.

* (14:30)

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

The background to the 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 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—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: –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 that has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city and significant risk 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, and including withdrawing Bill 30.

And this petition was signed by many Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am having some difficulty hearing the petitions being read. So I would ask members that are having conversations if you could please go to the chairs at the back or to the loge or bring the volume down a little bit in order that we can hear the petitions being read. Thank you.

Kelvin High School Gymnasium and Wellness Centre

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 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.

Signed by Marissa Claire Hamlin, Crystal Truong and Guo An Choo, as well as many other Manitobans.

Taxi Industry Regulation

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition on 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 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–

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: On a point of order, the honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Yes, Madam Speaker, the member for Kewatinook is on the phone. That's against the rules, so I'd like you to call her to order, please.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Government House Leader does have a point of order. There is to be no use of phones in the Chamber, and I would ask the member to put her phone away. Thank you.

* * *

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I appreciate the knowing of the rules and I apologize for being on the phone. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), to continue.

Mr. Saran: (7) The introduction of this bill jeopardize 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 plan to deregulate the taxi industry, including withdrawing Bill 30.

Signed by many concerned Manitobans.

Kelvin High School Gymnasium

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) During the past 20 years, a colossal community effort has been put into obtaining a new gymnasium for students at Kelvin High School.

(2) The Kelvin High School gym has been on the Winnipeg School Division one's list of projects for

approximately 10 years, and it has slowly worked its way up to the No. 1 priority.

Exercise and sports are a vital part of school activities for students, and these play an important role in developing skills including discipline, teamwork, co-operation and communication.

The current Premier of Manitoba has said that children and grandchildren should not have to pay the price of his austerity budgeting.

The Kelvin High School gym is a desperately needed space for children and youth to get exercise.

The community has raised more than \$1 million to pay for the gymnasium so it can be used as a community facility as well as a school facility.

Kelvin High School serves students from many areas of Winnipeg, including central Winnipeg.

Children and youth should not have to pay the financial problems of the Province.

Improving the physical and mental health of children through exercise and sport can keep children healthy and reduce health-care costs in the long term.

Having young people learn good habits like improving their physical and mental health through exercise can save a lot of money in future health expenditures by helping to keep Manitobans healthy.

This facility will enable members of the community to participate in physical exercise and sports activities in the evening, and since community members have raised money for this component, it will help to save health-care dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse its decision and to provide the remainder of the funding needed to build a new Kelvin High School gymnasium as soon as possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions? Grievances?

*(14:40)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to have a five-minute recess to prepare for a budget procedure?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to call a five-minute recess so that we can prepare for the budget?
[Agreed]

I will indicate that for the last minute of that we will ring the bells in order to call people back to the House.

The House recessed at 2:40 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:46 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

BUDGET ADDRESS

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

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the Legislative Assembly to deliver Budget 2017. Less than one year ago, our new government presented our first budget to Manitoba to begin correcting the course and turning away from the policies pursued by the previous government for more than a decade, policies that led to increasing debt, increasing taxes and failing services.

Our first budget took decisive action to halt the reckless established pattern of overspending across government. It took initial steps to address the unacceptable habit of paying more and getting less, and it began to address the fundamental financial risks that threatened the security and quality of services provided to Manitobans.

* (14:50)

Our second budget continues the critical work begun last year. It provides Manitobans with a clear understanding of the path that we must travel together to reach our ultimate destination, to realize the full potential of this magnificent province, to secure the financial recovery, improved services, economic prosperity and quality of life that

Manitobans seek and expect, to provide our children with a compelling reason to stay here and to offer the hope and opportunities that inspire others to journey here, to invest here and to make their home in Manitoba here. Budget 2017 is built for and by Manitobans.

Le Budget 2017 est conçu pour et par la population manitobaine.

Translation

Budget 2017 is built for and by Manitobans.

English

Our government did what good governments do—we took stock of where we are and then we asked the real experts—front-line workers, families, businesses, employers—for their input on the future direction of our province. We reached out and we listened. We directly asked Manitobans to tell us their priorities, and in response we received input from citizens across all regions and backgrounds. An unprecedented 18,000 interactions with Manitobans helped shape and share our shared path with suggestions on ways to reduce red tape, improve service delivery, eliminate government duplication and grow our economy.

Madam Speaker, with this budget we are moving Manitoba responsibly along the road to recovery with careful consideration to the impact that each decision will have on Manitobans and their families.

Avec ce budget, nous engageons de manière responsable le Manitoba sur la voie qui nous mènera au redressement, en accordant la plus grande attention aux répercussions que chaque décision aura sur les Manitobains et leur famille.

Translation

With this budget, we are responsibly moving Manitoba along the road to recovery, with great consideration to the impact that each decision will have on Manitobans and their families.

English

Our provincial neighbours are pursuing different paths involving stark decisions. Some are choosing higher taxes. Some are pursuing increased spending. With this budget Manitoba charts its own balanced course, one that confronts the fiscal dangers that we face with prudence, without higher taxes, without deep cutbacks, without unsustainable spending increases.

Our course pursues responsible recovery. It is based on approaches that control government spending, put innovation ahead of ideology, invest appropriately in front-line services to ensure that the right help is available to Manitobans in the right place at the right time.

Our plan avoids drastic measures. It chooses instead to steadily pursue and achieve improvements year after year. It will allow us to reach our destination together safely and securely.

This made-in-Manitoba approach, fully embodying the common sense that Manitobans are known for, is both realistic and achievable.

Madam Speaker, in our first budget, we committed to Manitobans that we would pursue measures that would responsibly restore Manitoba to fiscal balance with a target of achieving this within our second term. Standing here today, nearly one year later, I can state that we are taking the steady, measured steps required to honour our pledge to Manitobans.

After a decade of debt we are fixing the finances. After a decade of decay we are repairing our services. After a decade of decline we are rebuilding our economy.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada by 2020. Budget 2017 lays the foundation for Manitobans to achieve that goal.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba continues to face a large and looming fiscal challenge. Previous governments spent more than they brought in, and as they increased spending they grew our government's debt, leaving Manitobans increasingly vulnerable to rising interest rates, rising federal transfer—or and federal transfer payments that are shrinking in relation to cost increases. This continues to threaten our Province's ability to pay for the services that we provide to all citizens.

The previous government doubled the provincial debt, implemented significant tax hikes, broadened and then raised the provincial sales tax and ran deficits year after year. If left unaddressed, the downward spiral had an inescapable result, a \$1.7-billion deficit by 2019 if the previous government's structural deficit had been left unaddressed. These policies created danger for Manitobans now and in the future, because every dollar spent on rising interest payments to service the Province's debt is a dollar that cannot be spent

to improve services for Manitobans, services that Manitobans rely on like health care, education and infrastructure.

Manitoba homeowners understand the threat posed by potential increases to borrowing rates. We are living at a time of historically low rates, although we know that the now higher interest rates in the US exerts downward pressure on the Canadian dollar and may compel the Bank of Canada to start increasing interest rates here. And, when those rates rise, even a 1 per cent modest increase would 'nean'—mean nearly \$100 million in new costs to be borne by Manitobans.

These risks are compounded by Manitoba's reliance on federal transfer payments for health care, social services and education. When these transfer payments are eroded, as they have been for health, our Province must make up the difference. On health care alone, in 2017-2018, the federal government's decision to reduce their annual increase to the Canada Health Transfer means \$39 million less in funding from the federal government for Manitoba health-care services.

Prudent and early action is required to ensure that our own financial house is in order and to protect Manitoba from these external pressures and increasing uncertainties.

Madam Speaker, the first step to fixing our finances was to uncover and expose the risks left behind by the previous government. The actual deficit for 2015-2016, when we took office, was not the \$422 million budgeted by the previous administration; it was double that amount: \$846 million.

We set clear and open principles for sustainable fiscal planning. We reduced the size of Cabinet by one third. We began to address unnecessary red tape. We pared back senior management positions across core government and in Crown corporations. Government and opposition MLAs agreed to take a voluntary pay freeze for the duration of this 41st Legislature.

Performance and value-for-money reviews were undertaken on both our province's fiscal situation and our health-care system. We initiated extensive consultations with Manitobans and front-line workers. Key issues identified by these reviews have now been released in the report on the advisory panel for fiscal performance and in the 2017 budget papers.

In order to protect front-line services and avoid raising taxes, we are seeking to establish parameters for public sector compensation levels in Bill 28, The Public Services Sustainability Act. This reflects the fact that across the broader public sector, each 1 per cent increase in wage settlements costs approximately \$100 million. Our focus must be on outcomes that Manitobans can truly afford. And this all-hands-on-deck approach will continue to guide our discussions as we pursue and move forward with constructive dialogue with our public sector labour union leadership.

Madam Speaker, on all of these fronts we are making progress, and I am pleased to report today that our province's projected 2016-2017 summary deficit is a full \$39 million right now below what was projected in our first budget.

As the Province's finances deteriorated, so, too, did many of the public services that Manitobans rely on. Immediately upon forming government, we began to review problems and develop solutions to improve the quality of our services. Manitoba is spending more per capita on health care than nearly every other province, yet wait times for emergency health care, diagnostic testing and necessary surgeries rank worst in the country. Our government is addressing this. We have launched the expert Wait Times Reduction Task Force. The regional health authorities are already recommending some of the recommendations of Dr. Peachey in his report, which was commissioned by the previous government.

*(15:00)

Education outcomes are being improved through the creation of expanded and enriched student bursary programs, which will leverage private sector contributions to give Manitobans of all backgrounds enhanced opportunities to pursue higher education.

New Canadians enrich our communities and help grow our economy. We have eliminated the application backlog that left those wanting to come to Manitoba languishing on wait-lists, sometimes for up to three and a half years, fulfilling our commitment to process their applications and give them an answer within six months.

Economic growth is central to our ongoing prosperity. And our plan to rebuild our economy is working.

Thus far in 2017, Manitoba's employment is up by over 6,000 jobs, a full percentage point higher

than this time last year. Manitoba's unemployment rate now averages 6.0 per cent, the second lowest among provinces and well below Canada's unemployment rate of 6.7 per cent.

Year-to-date urban housing starts are up 95 per cent in Manitoba, the highest growth among all the provinces over the same period last year. Confidence in the business community is growing. We are welcoming private sector investment, including 150 new jobs and a \$400-million pea-processing facility to be built near Portage la Prairie by Roquette, a global processor of agricultural produce.

We are building real community partnerships that find creative solutions to the challenges that are facing rural Manitoba businesses. These efforts were instrumental in preventing the threatened closure of the pulp and paper mill in The Pas, and saving hundreds of direct and related jobs without putting taxpayers at risk.

Our Look North initiative sets out our government's long-term vision for sustainable economic and business development and growth for our province's North. This vision is driven by the determination of northerners and encourages and supports them as they establish priorities and market northern Manitoba as a place to visit, invest in and live. This strategy will build upon successes already seen in the tourism sector and in our mining sector. Recently, the Fraser Institute recognized Manitoba as the second best jurisdiction in the world for mining, up from 19th place just one year before.

The economic potential of our vast North is tied to our commitment to an enhanced duty to consult framework as a cornerstone for respectful and productive collaboration with indigenous communities. This ongoing work will continue in the coming year as we advance an engagement strategy to facilitate greater participation by indigenous groups in economic development throughout our province.

Our Premier's Enterprise Team has begun work to engage business leaders and entrepreneurs in a review of how we encourage investment in our province. And we look forward to the additional opportunities and economic benefits Manitoba will realize from our government's decision to join the New West Partnership and the recently finalized Canada Free Trade Agreement.

Budget 2017 puts Manitoba on a road to recovery with tax relief, no new tax increases, no new taxes. And in keeping with the commitment we made to Manitoba, our government is continuing to invest in the services that they depend on, with a 2.1 per cent overall increase to core government spending in 2017-18.

Manitoba's tax credit system is among the most complex and diversified in Canada, with more than 30 provincial tax credits and a value of over \$600 million. This adds to the compliance costs incurred by Manitobans and the administrative fees paid by our province to the federal government. Our government is focused on ensuring an affordable and competitive tax environment that increases productivity and encourages economic growth and job creation.

Budget 2017 maintains the children's arts and cultural activity tax credit, the fitness tax credit, the adoption tax credit, the fertility treatment tax credit and the Manitoban tuition fee and education amount.

This budget holds taxes on fuel and tobacco at current levels, but includes new measures to crack down on contraband tobacco smuggling via increased fines and penalties.

We are eliminating boutique tax credits that had little uptake or failed to meet objectives. And this budget brings in line with other provinces the political contributions tax credit and the research and development tax credit.

And, as our financial situation improves, our government will continue to implement measures to allow Manitobans to keep more of their own hard-earned money.

I thought you'd clap for that.

Budget 2017 continues to index personal income tax brackets and the basic personal amount, the amount a taxpayer can earn in Manitoba before starting to pay tax. These changes remove more than 2,000 taxpayers from the tax rolls entirely, resulting in an annual savings by Manitoba taxpayers of \$23 million this year, and \$34 million by the year 2020.

We have seen early progress within this last year, but there is much more that needs to be done.

While we have made marked improvements for our province's financial situation since taking office, Manitoba's summary budget for 2017-18 is projected at \$840 million, while the core government deficit

will be \$769 million. Again, this is not sustainable. To ensure accountability and progress, Budget 2017 includes multi-year projections and targets that our government can be expected to reach or exceed.

Budget 2017 invests in the services important to Manitobans by increasing funding for health care, families, education and justice, and targeting investments in the areas where it will have maximum impact.

Dans le Budget de 2017, le gouvernement investit dans les services qui sont importants pour les Manitobains en augmentant les fonds dans les domaines de la santé, des familles, de l'éducation et de la justice, tout en ciblant les investissements là où ils auront le plus grand effet.

Translation

Budget 2017 invests in the services important to Manitobans, by increasing funding for health care, families, education and justice, and targeting investments in the areas where it will have maximum impact.

English

A record level of investment is being made in the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living, including \$107.5 million in new spending with targeted investments in universal newborn hearing screening, an increase of \$1.7 million, an additional \$8.8 million for expanded dialysis treatment and \$1.6 million more to support mental health services.

We are increasing funding for Diagnostic Services Manitoba, Canadian Blood Services and the plasma blood strategy.

Additional investment is being made in the Home Cancer Drug Program and a further \$9.4 million is being committed for new oncology drugs through the Provincial Oncology Drug Program.

Spending smarter is already saving money for Manitobans, savings that are being reinvested in improvements to front-line services. These include the increased use of generic drugs across the health-care system and addressing pharmacy dispensing fees, which will bring Manitoba in line with other provinces while ensuring more affordable Pharmacare for Manitobans.

Budget 2017 provides the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service with two replacement ambulances

and bolsters both the provincial fleet ambulance program and the Lifeflight Air Ambulance program, while investing \$6.5 million to further reduce ambulance fee for Manitobans.

An increase of nearly \$1 million will allow three provincial nursing stations to continue to provide improved care to the northern Manitoba communities they serve.

And we remain committed to investing in personal-care homes in the communities where they are most needed, with a fresh focus on innovative and collaborative models that will allow for increased capacity while reducing the overall burden on Manitoba taxpayers.

Budget 2017 also makes significant investments in the Department of Families, increasing its budget by more than \$105 million, a 5.4 per cent increase over last year.

* (15:10)

Our government recognizes the supports that are required by many Manitoba families. Under the previous government, wait-lists for child-care spaces were allowed to grow to well over 10–12,000 spaces, a backlog that cannot be eliminated overnight. Our government is nevertheless moving quickly to address the challenge, adding 501 new licensed child-care spaces and 50 new home-based child-care spaces in this fiscal year, and by increasing operating grants for home-based child-care providers.

This budget will improve the supply and quality of affordable housing throughout the province by investing \$12.8 million in projects through the Social Innovation Fund under Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation.

We will continue to help families in need by providing over \$85 million to further support employment, income and rental assistance programming clients, including an increase of almost \$12 million to continue to index Rent Assist benefits to 75 per cent of median market rate. And we will continue to review the Rent Assist program to ensure that available benefits are reaching those most in need.

This budget protects the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, which remains the most unique and extensive of its kind in Manitoba. It benefits care providers even if they are not taxable, unlike the credits provided federally, and it benefits Manitobans who

are caring for a family member, a friend or a loved one, regardless of whether they reside together or apart.

Budget 2017 also includes investments to combat family violence and violence against women, like providing \$186,000 in additional support for the new Nova House shelter in Selkirk.

We continue the partnership we have established with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers in support of the Engaging Men and Boys in Violence Prevention campaign, and with Ka Ni Kanichihk's Heart Medicine Lodge, which provides culturally based support and advocacy services for indigenous women who have experienced sexual assault and violence.

Earlier today, my colleagues and I were pleased to provide a small contribution to the Manitoba chapter of the Shoebox Project for Shelters. This initiative provides supports to women in shelters or who are at risk of homelessness in communities across Manitoba. Each thoughtfully created and decorated shoebox is filled with personal items and other effects that can enhance self-esteem and reduce feelings of isolation for women in moments of deep crisis.

As Manitobans, we are renowned for our generosity. It is our country's 150th year, and it is our hope that all Manitobans will consider how they can show generosity to a charity or an organization of their choice. Each of us can make a difference in the life of someone less fortunate.

The Department of Education and Training will also see a significant funding boost in this budget with an overall increase in 36–of \$36 million. In February 2017, we announced a total investment of \$1.3 billion in our kindergarten to grade 12 education system.

In recognition of the potential of our younger generation, Budget 2017 provides two additional Unlocking the Toolkit Girls Forums to expose students in grades 5 and 6 to women who are working in non-traditional trades and science, technology, engineering and math fields.

The Manitoba government is committed to improving the lives of our youngest citizens through the work of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. Priorities in this budget include initiatives related to early childhood development, child and youth mental health, literacy and numeracy, as well as improved

outcomes for our most vulnerable children and youth.

We continue to work closely with post-secondary education and industry stakeholders to ensure that this province has a highly skilled and adaptable workforce able to meet the economic and labour market opportunities in the future. This will include a new labour market strategy aligned with industry and community needs, ensuring access to and availability of high-quality post-secondary education.

Budget '17 maintains the Seniors' School Tax Rebate, the Education Property Tax Credit and the Farmland School Tax Rebate. At the same time, Manitobans understand that programs that don't achieve results should not be continued. The Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate and Advance Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate did not meet their objective of encouraging students to come to, or remain in, Manitoba after graduation, and those will not be continued.

In Budget 2017 graduates are given a one-year grace period to claim their income tax rebate, which will be capped at \$500 for this final year.

Instead, Madam Speaker, students who need assistance the most will be provided with it when they need it most. Our government will continue to focus on reducing the barriers to post-secondary education for low-income students with increases to direct bursary support for students and the transformation of the Manitoba bursary program into a grant that will be available to students earlier, during the course of their studies.

When this is combined with partner funding and our new matching formula, these changes are expected to increase the total funding available to students through the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative by more than \$20 million.

Our government remains committed to investing in programs to ensure community safety, reduce the incidence of crime and provide necessary resources to law enforcement. The Department of Justice will receive an increase of \$12 million this fiscal year, an increase of 2.1 per cent, reflecting our ongoing resolve to ensure timely, effective and efficient access to justice.

There is, of course, much more work to be done. Backlogs continue to plague our province's justice system, creating lengthy delays that threaten our

ability to meet the targets set by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Jordan ruling.

We are meeting these inherited challenges with innovative and new approaches. Budget 2017 integrates restorative justice into Community Corrections and restates our request to the federal government to select Manitoba for a pilot project to reconsider the use of preliminary inquiries, an approach advocated by Manitoba's judiciary at all court levels.

A strong and growing economy is the pathway to protect and improve services for Manitobans, but a fiscal environment that is both attractive and competitive also requires a regulatory framework that encourages investment and allows for innovation.

In Manitoba, small- and medium-sized businesses alone now spend over \$1 billion a year annually to comply with federal, provincial and municipal regulations, and entrepreneurs estimate that a full 30 per cent of this sum, or \$360 million, is expended on red tape.

And these burdens are not faced by business alone. Presentations to the government's red tape reduction task force clearly indicate that non-profits and local government face the same red tape barriers. Our government is taking long overdue steps to address this. We are removing costly and ineffective requirements, antiquated laws and redundant language throughout provincial statutes, regulations, policies and forms.

And we have introduced Bill 22, The Regulatory Accountability Act, which creates Canada's most comprehensive regulatory framework, and in reducing the administrative burden faced by business, non-profit, local government and Manitoba residents, it will reduce the time and money wasted by Manitobans. It will benefit the provincial government, too, by reducing the tremendous inefficiency and cost associated with the interpretation of its own cumbersome rules and processes.

We are removing regulatory burdens so we can fully engage in public-private partnerships to get better value for money in our infrastructure investments. Budget 2017 includes a variety of measures that will encourage business to invest in our province. These include extending the mineral exploration tax credit and the manufacturing investment tax credit, as well as \$4-million

investment in a single funding window that will provide businesses with more effective access to provincial support. Changes to both red tape requirements and reductions to processing times will also make it faster and easier for businesses to recruit foreign workers.

Our aim and obligation remain focused throughout on the investments that yield growth and prosperity in our communities.

Notre objectif et notre obligation demeurent axés sur les investissements qui favorisent la croissance et la prospérité de nos collectivités.

Translation

Our aim and obligation remain focussed throughout on the investments that yield growth and prosperity in our communities.

* (15:20)

English

For a first time in a long time, Manitoba has a government that understands and appreciates the impact of agriculture on our economy, a government that recognizes the value of this sector that not only employs thousands of Manitobans but feeds both our province and the world.

Budget 2017 increases investment in agriculture, funding an enhanced Livestock Growth Strategy and an Agricultural Modelling and Forecasting Program in 2017-2018. It maintains borrowing limits for individuals and associations through the Livestock Associations Loan Guarantee program. It provides \$3 million in provincial Growing Forward 2 support for the Grain Innovation Hub to support research and increased development activities that will grow the livestock sector. And it includes our government's commitment to make farming more productive and profitable for our producers, their communities and our province.

Our new government committed to spending at least \$1 billion each year on strategic infrastructure on roads and bridges, flood protection, hospitals, schools, universities and colleges, municipal projects and other provincial and local infrastructure.

In fact, Madam Speaker, overall strategic infrastructure investment is forecast to reach over \$1.7 billion in 2017-2018. This is one of the highest total infrastructure expenditures in Manitoba history: \$747 million for roads, highways, bridges and flood protection; \$641 million for health, education and

housing infrastructure; \$370 million for municipal, local and other provincial infrastructure.

Our strategic infrastructure investments will directly support economic growth and jobs for Manitobans as a key part of our long-term multi-year commitment.

These investments will be appropriate. They will be aligned with the objectives of maximizing value for money and return on investment, while ensuring an expanded fair say for municipalities through greater flexibility and greater autonomy.

Funding envelopes will reduce red tape for municipalities and third-party proponents, and overall access will be improved through progression to a single-window model. This overhaul of strategic infrastructure support to municipalities follows the most robust municipal infrastructure consultative process in decades and positions Manitoba as the first province to deliver a truly functional single-'windel' model.

In November 2016, our government announced a multi-year highway capital funding commitment of approximately \$500 million annually, exceeding the average of the last five years. Early approval and early tendering schedule have allowed for construction projects to be advertised throughout the winter to optimize competitive pricing.

We are also set to receive online bids and online bid bonds—bid bonds for our bonded construction and maintenance contracts, which will result in savings of time and money for contractors and the Department of Infrastructure.

Budget 2017 also includes a record annual investment in water-related infrastructure. The \$60-million budget represents a 33 per cent increase over the previous year and will allow for investments in flood protection, drainage and other water-control infrastructure.

Manitoba has an extensive flood protection system. However, we are committed to addressing its vulnerabilities, most notably with the completion of a lake saint—Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin outlets project. A preferred route for the channels has been identified, and engineering, environmental and consultations with indigenous groups are now focused on this preferred route.

As Manitobans face our shared challenges together, our government recognizes the vital

importance of partnerships and strengthened relationships.

À l'heure où les Manitobains relèvent ensemble les défis communs auxquels ils font face, notre gouvernement reconnaît l'importance vitale des partenariats et du resserrement des liens.

Translation

As Manitobans face our shared challenges together, our government recognizes the vital importance of partnerships and strengthened relationships.

English

Manitoba continues to pursue reconciliation with indigenous groups impacted by the catastrophic flooding of 2011, and we are proceeding with a collaborative approach to Operation Return Home. Working together, we are currently on track for the first phase of evacuees to begin moving home this summer.

We also continue to engage in productive discussions with the leadership of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, the City of Winnipeg and the federal government toward the goal of constructing the Shoal Lake access road, commonly known as Freedom Road, linking Shoal Lake 40 to the all-weather road network.

We are prioritizing the growth and development of urban Aboriginal economic development zones, which create economic and employment opportunities for Manitoba's indigenous communities. Since our first budget, three such zones have already been created in Thompson, in Winnipeg and in Headingley.

Our investments in the tremendous tourism potential of our province continue in Budget 2017, with the continued implementation of our 96/4 tourism investment model in partnership with Travel Manitoba. This year's budget adds an additional \$452,000 to this initiative and reflects a total investment of almost \$4 million since we formed government.

Sustainable Development and Manitoba Public Insurance will be partnering with Snoman Inc., Manitoba's snowmobile association, to further integrate the province's snowmobile trail network and make trail passes more accessible for Manitobans. This will lead to improved maintenance

and grooming of Manitoba's snowmobile trail network, along with greater tourism opportunities for our provincial parks.

Manitoba is the home of countless natural wonders. We have more than 100,000 lakes, pristine forests, ancient wetlands; 90 provincial parks exist within our province. We have the privilege of enjoying them. We have the responsibility to protect them, not solely to ensure that their beauty is conserved for the next generation, but also to preserve the opportunities they present for sustainable economic development.

Budget 2017 includes commitments to develop and modernize our parks system, invest in the protection of our natural resources, wildlife and habitats and adhere to stringent environmental measures and standards.

Manitoba also boasts a diverse and thriving arts and cultural scene. Our government recognizes the impact, both to our economy and to our quality of life that the arts make to our community. And we have committed to spending more than \$63 million in Budget 2017 in targeted strategic investments within Manitoba's sport, culture and heritage sectors.

In a related vein, Manitoba has one of the most competitive business environments in the global film industry. Budget 2017 continues the Film and Video Production Tax Credit. And we will eliminate administrative redundancies by readying for the elimination of the current Film Classification Board in favour of a system that adopts film classifications already established in British Columbia.

Madam Speaker, our government inherited a fiscal situation marked by great risk and many challenges. Correcting that dangerous course will take time, first to assess and stabilize the situation and then to deliberately and steadily steer in a safer direction.

Our first year has seen initial progress, but much work remains. Budget 2017 eases us along the road to recovery, a managed and responsible recovery based on sensible and practical decisions and characterized by balanced and measured actions.

We have just begun this journey. And we will, without a doubt, face many challenges, as together we move forward as Manitobans. But we do so with conviction, with common sense, with clarity of purpose and with the compassion and respect for all Manitobans.

Le Budget de 2017 nous permet de progresser dans l'entreprise essentielle confiée à notre gouvernement. Et nous le faisons avec compassion et respect pour tous les Manitobains.

Translation

Budget 2017 advances us on the critical undertaking entrusted to our government. And we are proceeding with compassion and respect for all Manitobans.

English

We are holding the line—no new taxes, no new tax increases. Manitobans pay enough taxes. And we are focusing increased spending in areas that are most important to Manitobans: health care, education, children, families and the protection of our communities.

This budget provides significant infrastructure and operating support based on value for money, better and more streamlined systems and increased flexibility and choice for our partners. It finds savings and efficiencies, first in government, beginning at the top and leading by example.

* (15:30)

Budget 2017 is open, transparent; it's accountable to all Manitobans. It shares the financial realities that we must face as Manitobans, and that we must manage as the government.

Madam Speaker, permit me to recall my concluding remarks approximately a year ago in this Chamber, for they remain as true on this day as they were on that day: The only thing better than today in Manitoba is tomorrow in Manitoba.

We have every confidence that Manitobans are up to the task of overcoming our share of challenges, and each of us knows in our hearts and our minds that Manitoba is today and will be tomorrow the best place to live.

Madam Speaker, we are on the road to recovery. Thank you.

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

Motion agreed to.

Messages

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I have two messages from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as well as the budget documents, which I would like to table.

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

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

And, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the province for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March 2018, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

* * *

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

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