

**Third 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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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	Ind.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
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SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, March 13, 2018**

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

Please be seated.

Good afternoon, everyone.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 15—The Film and Video  
Classification and Distribution Act**

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke), that Bill 15, The Film and Video Classification and Distribution Act, will now be read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Cox:** I am pleased to rise in the House today for the first reading of Bill 15, The Film and Video Classification and Distribution Act. Today I am pleased and honoured to be introducing this bill to the Manitoba Legislature.

This is a bill that will repeal and replace the existing legislation on how films are regulated within The Amusements Act. This act proposes to eliminate the Manitoba film board, reduce red tape for the film and video classification and distribution industry and reduce the footprint of government. The Film and Video Classification and Distribution Act will preserve safeguards in place for consumers to ensure that they can make informed decisions about the film or video that they are about to watch. Consumers will continue to have access through the government's Internet film classifications database.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**U14AA Magic Ringette Champions**

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Madam Speaker, Canada has a long history of inventing sports, from hockey to baseball, football to basketball. However, I am here to talk about another sport we have invented relatively recently.

In 1963, the sport of ringette made its first appearance in an ice rink that so many Manitoba parents are familiar with, as it seems we spend most our winters in such buildings drinking Tim's coffee and cheering on our children. And speaking of parents, let's not forget the thousands of kilometres they drive each year and hours of lost sleep getting their daughters to their early morning practices.

One such team that deserves our cheers is the U14AA Magic ringette team. Last month, this group of young women, ages 12 and 13 years old, won the Ringette Manitoba Provincial Championship, sporting a final record of 13 wins, three losses and two ties.

As a result, they have earned the title of Team Manitoba and will be proudly representing our province with one other team March 22nd to 24th at the Western Canadian Ringette Championships in Saskatoon.

Many of these players began playing ringette as early as six years old and come from several ringette associations across Winnipeg and southern Manitoba. From shuffling on the ice as bunnies, they developed into the powerful athletes you see in the gallery today. Their skill with a ring is second to none, the grace and speed of their skating is mesmerizing and their teamwork on and off the ice is inspiring.

These young ladies are committed to the sport itself and believe in giving back to the ringette community, whether it be volunteering their time as apprentice coaches, participating in Come Try Ringette events or donating fundraising efforts to

Keira's Krusade, a memorial ringette tournament in support of CancerCare Manitoba.

These young athletes are the embodiment of hard work and determination and take great pride in their accomplishments. They are proud and look forward to representing our province at Westerns.

Please join me in congratulating the Magic players, their coaches and their parents with them today and extending them the very best of luck next week as they represent Manitoba in Saskatoon.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Morris.

**Mr. Martin:** Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the names of the players, the—and coaches and assistant coaches, to have their names added to Hansard.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to have those names included in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

*U14AA Magic players: Ryanne Bass, Sydney Bass, Peyton Cerqueira, Peyton Friesen, Lindsay Harder, Madison Hopkins, Haley Ichiiwa, Dominique Iezzi, Megan Kull, Jenna Lavallee, Riel Meyer, Lena Nitchie, Teala Normand, Arielle Ochman, Julia Penning, Raeanne Peters, Sydney Pollock*

*U14AA Magic coaches: Lauren Burton and Britt Stojak, head coaches; Amber Biebrick and Madison Kidd, assistant coaches; Jaime Simpson, goalie coach*

### SHEday

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Share, hear, empower: these are three strong action words that two beautiful women wanted to change other—that wanted to encourage other women to act on.

Marina James and Mary Jane Loustel noticed a lack of movements in Manitoba to empower and encourage women. These two businesswomen in leadership roles wanted to create an opportunity for women in all different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to come together to inspire and support one another through their journey, and thus, SHEACCELERATOR was born, a social enterprise focused on creating initiatives that accelerate the success and inclusion of women.

Because these strong women had the attitude anything is possible, they took a chance and created SHEday. Since 2014, SHEday has doubled its

attendance to 1,500 participants. Unlike other women's conferences, SHEday encourages women to bring who they are to the table by including their cultural practices.

When women share their knowledge, experience, stories, they realize that they are not alone. Conversations help women identify their strengths and build on them, advancing them into important roles in society and becoming economically self-sufficient. This means greater social inclusion and prosperity and the ability to participate in decision making.

I had the pleasure of attending SHEday in January and realized that it's just not a one-day event; it's a gathering to build a global foundation to empower women. It's about building—bringing people together to network and experience the power of conversation in inspiring and facilitating success. As these two women continue to evolve and grow their brand, Marina and MJ hope to support and grow their initiatives for women in science, health care and education.

Please join me in congratulating these two women who are in the gallery today for their tireless work to try and influence change.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Point Douglas.

**Mrs. Smith:** Madam Speaker, could I ask for leave to have the names included in the Hansard?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

*Marina James and Mary Jane Loustel*

\* (13:40)

### Brooks and Jen White

**Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to recognize Arthur-Virden constituents Brooks and Jen White who are the fifth generation of—and own and operate Borderland Agriculture, located in the southwest corner of Manitoba near Lyleton.

When you approach the farm, picture an image of days gone by or an image of the old Wild West movie with bison grazing in the backdrop of gold and green prairie fields.

Although the image of the farm may be of days gone by, one focuses on the farm operation that integrates over 600 bison in the diverse cropping

system, integrating the bison herd in the manner that helps with building healthy soils and adds value to the operation.

Currently, borderline agriculture has a total land base of 7,500 acres with 5,000 acres being used for annual crop production.

On March 3rd, I was pleased to attend the Manitoba's outstanding young–youth–young farmers banquet where Brooks and Jen proudly accepted the award as Manitoba's Outstanding Young Farmers.

Having the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) at the table to host for the nominees, I drew to his attention that having both finalists this year from Arthur-Virden constituency 'jush' proves that Arthur-Virden farmers are the best in Manitoba.

Congratulations, Brooks and Jen, on winning this prestigious award. It's great to see the next generation of farmers like yourselves using innovative practices on your mixed-farming operation, combined with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Best of luck as you present Manitoba at the national level.

Madam Speaker, Brooks and Jen are—White are here today with us in the public gallery. Let us stand and acknowledge them with their hard work, innovation, dedication to Manitoba's farming industry.

#### **National Pharmacare Program**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to make very clear the No. 1 priority issue for my constituents and then—therefore, my No. 1 priority: a national pharmacare program.

The people who live in Burrows, including myself, have been working very hard on this, and over the past couple years the problem has become even more apparent. This is why my constituents were passionate enough to start a petition. It is why I continue to talk about it here in the House through questions and statements. It is why I am going to the national convention next month to propose this program to our federal Health Minister.

It is critical that members of this House understand why this is such an important issue. Manitobans should not be forced to choose between their prescribed medications and heat in their homes. Unfortunately, they are.

Madam Speaker, the time is now. There is momentum for us to have a national health-care program.

The NDP's recent declaration of support is great; however, imagine the impact if we sent an all-party message to Ottawa recognizing the value of a national pharmacare program being added to the Canada Health Act.

I truly hope this provincial government considers supporting this.

Thank you.

#### **Dauphin Hosts the 2020 Manitoba Summer Games**

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Madam Speaker, playing sports is one of the greatest ways to help Manitoba's youth develop healthy, active lifestyles while building positive values and winning attitudes.

Whether a child develops into an athlete or not, training or trying out teaches critical lessons of skill development, teamwork, risk taking and challenging oneself to become better. These benefits are universal and important elements to becoming successful adults.

Setting a goal to compete in either Manitoba's winter or summer games is a great way to encourage and support youth development. With the help of families, mentors and coaches, the Manitoba games help to identify Manitoba athletes who have the potential to advance to higher levels of competition.

Just recently, Thompson hosted a successful Manitoba Winter Games, and in January the Province of Manitoba, Sport Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro announced that the City of Dauphin will be hosting the 2020 Manitoba Summer Games.

Dauphin has a terrific track record of hosting many successful events, and with a volunteer and community support base that's second to none, Dauphin's committee is well on the way to preparing for the games.

Manitoba's youth can choose to compete in athletics, baseball, basketball, cycling, golf, sailing, soccer, softball, swimming, volleyball and triathlon.

In just a little over two years Manitoba's youth have the opportunity to participate in regional tryouts to become part of regional teams that go on to participate in provincial finals.

I want to encourage everyone to start spreading the word now that the 2020 Manitoba Summer Games are right around the corner.

Let's encourage all of our youth to give it a look, to give it a try, because promoting positive youth development leads to positive outcomes for everyone.

Thank you.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Health-Care Budget Government Priorities

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, the Premier's cuts to our health-care system are continuing. You know, budgets are about priorities and we see the priorities of this Premier in his broken-promises document that they brought forward here yesterday.

Now, according to the CBC, quote, health spending will increase 0.9 per cent, which will result in cuts because that's lower than the rate of inflation. End quote.

Cuts to front-line services like nurses and doctors will affect patient care. It will affect people at the bedside and doctor shortages will only increase after this Premier cut, again, an important doctor-retention program.

Long-term care services have been frozen and this province will go another year without a personal-care-home bed.

Will the Premier reconsider his plan for cutting health care and instead invest in front-line health-care services?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well sadly, here again, Madam Speaker, the preamble is loaded with inaccuracies and that's unfortunate. This is a myth, of course; the myth of cuts that the member keeps repeating—doesn't make it any truer when he says it multiple times.

We are actually fully over \$600 million more invested in health care now than the NDP ever were when they were in government, Madam Speaker, and so what is important to understand is that, yes, we are facing the challenges that they failed to face in terms of finding savings within all aspects of government. We're reducing the expenditures that were unnecessarily incurred with a top-heavy administration. We're looking at eliminating duplication, waste and overlap throughout all systems of

government, and by finding these savings we are bending the cost curve because we understand that health care has to be there, not just for us today but for us tomorrow and, more importantly, for our children and grandchildren as well.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, some Manitoba families wonder what health-care services will be left in the future after this Premier is done.

We know that he cut, in the budget yesterday, \$9 million from Pharmacare here in our province. So that's \$9 million less for Pharmacare for patients and families. Now this is after he's already cut millions from the special drug program and for coverage for sleep apnea machines, and it's particularly shocking given that there is an opportunity right now to push the federal Liberals to actually fund a universal national pharmacare program.

We've seen them get a little scared. They're already starting to walk that back, but the Premier could show leadership and call on Ottawa to do the right thing. However, this \$9 million cut for Pharmacare is taking the province in the wrong direction.

Will he reconsider and instead reinstate the funding for Pharmacare, for the special drug program and for sleep apnea machines?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, again, Madam Speaker, as the member tries to rebrand himself he might try to depart from the past practices of his predecessors in putting misinformation on the record again and again.

The fact remains that we are invested more heavily in health care than ever before. The fact also is that we are endeavouring to get better outcomes than we have ever gotten before and that is important because we inherited a system that truly was broken.

Where the member opposite fails to recognize that there were serious problems, we've addressed those problems. We'll continue to in co-operative fashion, using honest research and we're going to make sure that we move forward to improve the systems for the people of Manitoba today and tomorrow as well, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, in addition to cutting \$9 million from Pharmacare at a time when there's an opportunity to create a universal Pharmacare program for Manitobans, the Premier also cut \$3 million from the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. So, a cut of some \$3 million at a time when our province is in the middle of a drug crisis.

Opioids, methamphetamine, Xanax, many other drugs, are damaging many families in this province. This Premier saw fit to cut millions of dollars from the budget which offers treatment and helps people combat addictions.

\*(13:50)

Now, travelling the province over the past number of months in Winnipeg and Brandon, in the Swan Valley region and others, people are asking for more services, more supports to combat these scourges of addictions in our province.

So will the Premier reconsider and instead restore the funding for the Addictions Foundation?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, the last year the NDP was in power—and thank goodness it was the last year—they ran close to a billion-dollar deficit, Madam Speaker. They spent far, far more than they could afford, far, far more than they could gain in higher taxes that they had jacked up on Manitoba households year after year. Even with those massive record tax increases that they imposed on Manitobans after promising not to, they still failed to meet their expenditure requirements because they couldn't understand how to get better value for money.

And, Madam Speaker, we are spending more on the most comprehensive pharmaceutical provisions in the country. We are making sure that we are investing in more paramedics. We are lowering the ambulance fees, which were ridiculously high under the NDP. We're expanding access for renal dialysis. We're investing in new capital projects and extensively in maintenance and repairs that were neglected by the previous administration. And we've introduced a newborn screening program long overdue in this province.

The actions of our Health Minister and our government are commendable. I congratulate our Health Minister for his progress. Where they got it wrong, Madam Speaker, we are getting it right.

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

### Carbon Pricing Plan Cost-of-Living Concerns

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** So after cutting \$9 million from Pharmacare, \$3 million from the Addictions Foundation, they've also cut \$150 million out of the Infrastructure budget. So it's clear that life is getting harder and harder for people in this province under this Premier.

Bus passes are going up, MPI and Hydro bills are going up, tuition is definitely going up, rent is going up. *[interjection]*

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Supports for seniors, renters and recent grads: all going down.

Now, as of September 1st this year, the Premier has decided that Manitobans will have to pay hundreds more each year in order to drive to work and to heat their homes, some \$300 more for the average family. In place, the Premier is offering \$12 back to these families this year. But big polluters like the Koch brothers won't have to pay anything in the form of a carbon price this year. So I hope Manitoba families remember, when they're gassing up at the pump, that the huge multinationals are paying nothing.

Will the Premier reconsider this misguided plan?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I can't honestly accuse the previous government of having a misguided plan, Madam Speaker, because they had no plan at all. No plan at all, except to jack up taxes. And that's exactly what the member is proposing again with his carbon tax fantasy.

He has not opposed the federal government's plan, therefore he supports it, and if he supports it he supports a carbon tax which ultimately will siphon off a billion dollars away from this province over to Ottawa, where they'll get to decide what to do with it.

That's not the plan we propose. The plan we have proposed for Manitoba will work better. It will protect our environment better; it will protect our economy better, and it will make sure that we do everything we can to retain our reputation—well deserved—for being the greenest of green provinces.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** He sounds pretty green giving that answer given the fact that he's leaving Manitoba families with less and less money at the kitchen table as a result of the policy decisions that they announced yesterday.

You know, when the families sit down at the kitchen table at the end of September, they're going to recognize that they have less money as a result of the gas tax that this Premier is bringing in. At the same time, they're being forced to contend with tax increases, fee hikes, frozen minimum wage, tuition, all these other cost-of-living increases that the Premier has instituted over the past few years.

This is at a time when we are asking Manitoba families to reduce their carbon footprints. But how are they supposed to do so when they have less and less money in their pocket as a result of the measures this Premier has announced?

**Mr. Pallister:** I appreciate the question, Madam Speaker.

The only green the NDP's ever cared about is the green in Manitoban's pockets. The member is trying to rebrand himself and, in the process, he's departed from using his party's name on his literature again.

Following the lead of the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway)—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —the member for Elmwood who wisely duct-taped—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —over New Democrat on his signs in the last election. The member has put out taxpayer-funded brochures with no reference whatsoever to his party.

Why, Madam Speaker? Because he's running away from a record of raiding the kitchen tables of Manitobans.

Manitobans understand where their tax hikes have come from in the past. Where the NDP proposed to raise taxes year after year, we're proposing to lower them and leave more money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, that's not actually the case. It's not actually, you know, as the Premier presents it.

Manitobans know that they're paying more this year as a result of the budget that was tabled yesterday. At the same time, what are the Koch brothers going to be paying into the Manitoba economy to try and help us transition—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —towards more environmentally friendly practices? Nothing, Madam Speaker. So it's simply about making life less and less affordable, making things more expensive for the average family here in our province.

Those families know that the cost of gas just got higher. They know it will cost more to heat their homes—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —this year. Instead of real support, they're going to get 12 bucks back from this government. No real action to transition to a green economy either.

So how are Manitobans supposed to transition to more environmentally friendly practices when they have less and less money in their pockets as a result of the policies of this Premier?

**Mr. Pallister:** Finally, a preamble with something the member knows something about. Taking money away from Manitobans is something the NDP has great expertise in.

Now, Madam Speaker, over the 16 years they were in government, total, they managed to raise the basic personal exemption by 20 per cent less than we're going to raise it in just our first four years in government.

Now, Madam Speaker, we'll accomplish more in terms of leaving money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans in four years than they did in 16. In terms of the number of people who are coming off the tax rolls—entirely off the tax rolls—as a result of raising the basic personal exemption, over their 16 years, less than 30,000 people. In our four, 35,400 people will be taken off the tax rolls.

The bulk of the savings derived from tax reduction in this province will go right back to the kitchen tables of middle- and low-income Manitoba



families, where that money belongs. The NDP opposite managed to take the money off the table; we're putting it back where it belongs, Madam Speaker.

### **Mental Health and Addiction Services Federal Funding Agreement**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** Last August, after months of delay, the Minister of Health signed an agreement with the federal government that targeted \$400 million over 10 years, \$40 million a year, for home and community care, mental health and addiction services. This budget was an opportunity to strengthen mental health and addiction services, yet health-mental health budget only went up by \$38,000, an increase of 0.3 per cent, must let-must-much less than inflation. Not a single additional dollar to health authorities for mental health supports.

Is the minister using this new additional federal money to backfill his government cuts, or is he just cutting mental health services and pocketing the money?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, I need to use this opportunity to correct the record from the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew). There's been no decrease of funding for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

But perhaps where he was confused is there has been a reduction in ambulance fees. For years you could-

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, for years you could tell it was spring in Manitoba because the snow was melting and ambulance fees were going up under the NDP. Now we're reducing those ambulance fees from \$500 to \$340, and they're going down further. Ambulance fees are dropping almost as fast as NDP poll numbers. *[interjection]*

\* (14:00)

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The honourable member for Minto, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Swan:** I'm sorry to hear that the Minister of Health apparently hasn't read his own government's budget, because if he'll turn to page 78 of the budget document he will see a \$2.7-million cut to Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

The minister must be aware that there are people in this province with serious concerns about opioid abuse, about methamphetamine abuse. People's lives and public safety are being put at risk. Yet, last year, this minister cut support for AFM by \$800,000, and this year, whether he knows it or not, there's another \$2.7-million cut. Manitobans have lost 3 and a half million dollars in services.

Why is this minister attacking addiction services when Manitobans need them more than ever? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries used to take \$2.7 million, provide it to AFM, and AFM would provide it to Marymount. Now, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is taking that \$2.7 million and giving it directly to Marymount.

Madam Speaker, there's been no reduction to AFM. He needs to look at the budget a little bit more closely. Maybe he was blinded by the fact that there were 60 new full-time paramedics that were hired in the budget. In fact, Eric Glass from the Paramedic Association said that he'd never seen such a commitment to paramedics in the history of the province of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Swan:** Months ago, this Health Minister received a \$150,000 report from VIRGO consultants on a mental health and addictions strategy. These consultants, we're told, worked on their report for eight months, and they delivered a draft report to government last year. Yet, yesterday's budget made no mention at all of a mental health and addictions strategy. Instead, we see cuts to supports for Manitobans in the upcoming year.

There is no strategy. There is no plan. There's no new money in the budget to deal with mental health and addictions, despite unprecedented revenue coming from Ottawa, including \$40 million in targeted funding.

If the minister is so sure of himself, will he table today an accounting of what he did with \$40 million in new, targeted federal funding?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, it's the third question where the member is wrong.

As I've said repeatedly for the last almost a year now, the VIRGO report is going to be brought to us as a government by March 31st. It's still not March 31st, Madam Speaker, but that hasn't stopped us from doing many things.

Of course, we've increased the accessibility to those who needed help at HSC by opening up additional beds. We've doubled the amount of women's beds at AFM for women who need treatment. We've made naloxone available right across the province. We've made Suboxone more available for those who need it, Madam Speaker. We've partnered with the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre.

But, to be fair, I'll now list off all the things the NDP did for those who needed help with drug addiction.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **National Housing Strategy Need for Manitoba Participation**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Last week, housing advocates called on the Province of Manitoba to chip in to a—for a national housing strategy that will not go far enough to relieve our stretched social housing sector. Madam Speaker, \$15 million—\$15 billion of this national strategy is contingent on Manitoba's commitment to contribute.

Without that money, this national strategy won't even come close to meeting the government's demands for safe, affordable social housing. Despite—Manitoba's budget fails to set up funding for one single housing unit. Even after selling a multi-unit building on Smith Street, this minister won't create any new housing.

Why is this minister ignoring the thousands of Manitobans who need affordable housing?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** Providing housing solutions for Manitobans is a priority for this government.

We know the NDP's track record when it comes to housing, where they left over \$500 million deferred maintenance on that. This government will not do that; we've increased our housing budget by close to 9 per cent in this budget.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** This budget is just another book full of broken promises. Two years ago, this minister

promised to release a housing strategy, but never moved on it, instead sat on his hands. Then he hiked the rent for Manitoba Housing and cut Rent Assist. Now, this budget is failing to move on a potential 15 million—billion dollars in funding for quality, accessible housing that Manitobans need. The budget fails to bump up spending by even 10 per cent.

Will this minister be straight with Manitobans and tell him that he left \$15 billion in housing on the table?

**Mr. Fielding:** I want to say to the member that she's completely wrong on this issue.

The Manitoba government is negotiating with the federal government in terms of a national housing strategy. We'll be coming together in April to sign on to that agreement if there's an agreement amongst the principals. No money is being left. We need to sign it. It's typical of the NDP where they're spending money before we even know what we're getting.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** As if increasing the cost of housing wasn't enough of a burden for low-income families, the minister actually cut income assistance by nearly \$13 million.

This government is abandoning low-income families and seniors who are having to make impossible choices in order to survive every day. They are going without food, without transit passes and even without warm clothes so that they can afford their rent. Now this minister wants to claw back EIA and take families off the payroll.

Will this minister admit that the budget abandons low-income Manitobans?

**Mr. Fielding:** I encourage the member to do her homework when she reviews the budget document.

As everyone knows, the EIA programs are mandated programs where we support people that enter into the system. Our government has focused on getting people back to work, which we think is truly important. We have invested things like the jobs on market program that allows people to get into work a lot quicker. In fact, we've closed over 550 different cases because of the work we're doing.

We're giving people a chance to get back in the work world. Why won't the NDP follow suit?

### Highway Infrastructure Budget for 2018

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I have a question to the Premier.

In the—his first two budgets his government cut the highways budget by \$82 million. But yesterday's budget cuts dwarf those reductions, cutting a staggering \$152 million from highways. That's a total reduction of \$238 million—point five million in just a few short years.

Chris Lorenc from the Heavy Construction Association said the news came as a shock and such a large cut will hurt Manitoba companies and result in fewer construction jobs.

Madam Speaker, why is this Premier massively cutting investments that address our infrastructure deficit?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I appreciate the question from the independent member for Elmwood, Madam Speaker, and I would like to say that I know he understands—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —the NDP record on this is less than admirable in terms of infrastructure investments. They overcommitted with each budget and under delivered with each year, and so they left \$2 billion on the table of uninvested money in infrastructure, until the year before the election when, naturally, in an effort to show off and get credit, they decided they would then invest.

This raid, raid, raid-and-then-have-a-parade approach is not what we're doing, Madam Speaker. We've committed to investing over the course of our first term in a record amount of infrastructure investment—thoughtfully done, well prioritized—and we will make sure that we deliver on that promise because we understand the infrastructure deficit handed to us by the previous government is a reality and we are going to fix it where they got it wrong.

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

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Maloway:** I would like to table for the Minister of Infrastructure a government press release dated November 18th, 2016, just more than a year ago. And in it the Minister of Infrastructure committed \$500 million per year for highway infrastructure for each of the next four years.

That was their promise to the people of Manitoba just a little over a year ago.

Why have they broken their promise?  
*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure):** Well, Madam Speaker, in the last 17 years of the NDP government, not a mile, not a yard, not a foot and not an inch was ever completed on Freedom Road. And in the last two years of our government not just have we started Freedom Road but, by the end of this year, we will have Freedom Road built.

Where they couldn't get it done, we succeeded.  
*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The honourable member for Elmwood, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Maloway:** The minister certainly didn't answer the question.

In a growing province like Manitoba, government needs to maintain its investments.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Maloway:** Madam Speaker, the government needs to maintain its investments in highways just to keep up. The government pretended to understand this. They promised to maintain highway spending, but that promise has now been broken.

Based on the numbers the government itself provided in their press release, yesterday's \$150-million reduction means 1,500 fewer jobs in Manitoba and a \$121-million reduction in Manitoba's GDP.

Why is this Premier breaking his promise and making cuts that will hurt Manitoba?

**Mr. Schuler:** If the member would've been paying attention to yesterday's good-news budget, he would've heard five new schools, Freedom Road, Lake St. Martin channels, \$500 million in infrastructure and maintenance and \$1 billion in private investment.

Madam Speaker, where they couldn't succeed we will get it done.

### **Status of Women Department Funding**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Last week, we received a disappointing report about the status of women in Manitoba. We have the highest rates of sexual assault in the country, women still earn less than their male peers and women continue to be under-represented in trades and leadership roles.

Madam Speaker, words are meaningless without action, so I can't help but question why this Premier (Mr. Pallister) is cutting \$48,000 from the department responsible for the status of women.

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** I'm really proud of Budget 2018 and the job that our government did, and our Finance Minister, in terms of addressing priorities for women.

We've got record investments in child care. We know that that's a huge priority for women entering the labour market.

We have got huge investments in other areas that will help women. We've—we're raising the basic personal exemption and bringing modest-earning–income-earning women right off the tax rolls, leaving more money on their kitchen tables so that they can care for their families.

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

### **Manitoba's Affordability Cost-of-Living Concerns**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, continuing on with the budget, this government is making life far more expensive for Manitoba families, and Manitobans see right through this government's misleading rhetoric.

Everyone sees the enormous hikes in tuition, seniors programs, hydro rates, gas prices, health services and carbon taxes. Everyone also knows that it was this government that cut the municipalities' funding, which led to increases in transit fees and water and property bills.

Madam Speaker, why is the Premier trying to mislead Manitobans and costing them more than ever before?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** I thank the member for the question. It gives me a chance to talk about the many excellent investments that Budget 2018 makes in Manitoba households for

Manitobans. Where the NDP took more and gave less, we are taking less and giving more back to Manitoba households.

I noted, yesterday, in comments that the leader of the Liberal Party made, he could not be more wrong when he talks about the record investment that we're making to bring tax cuts to Manitobans, leaving more money on their kitchen tables.

This is a good-news budget. We are keeping our word. We are keeping our promises. We are giving Manitobans a break, and why? Because they deserve it.

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

### **Immigration Funding Inquiry**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, I found it very alarming to see in yesterday's budget that this government is cutting \$195,000 from the department of immigration. Population growth is key to Manitoba's growth in so many areas, including our economy. We should be investing in immigration programs and services, not slashing their budgets.

Can the minister please share with the House where exactly these cuts to the department of immigration are being made?

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** Well, thank you very much for the question on immigration.

As the member knows, when we came into government we found a huge backlog in terms of waiting lists on immigration. We eliminated that within the first year.

We now continue to expand the services available to new immigrants in Manitoba and attract more on a regular basis. We've made special programs for students and for new entrepreneurs to come to Manitoba. We are the party of inclusiveness, and immigration is part of that.

### **New School Construction Brandon East Announcement**

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** Seems we're on the topic of facts today. It is no secret that for 17 years the NDP did nothing to address the need for an additional school in Brandon.

Can the Minister of Education update the Assembly on how our PC government is keeping our promises and remind everybody on all sides of the House as to what important educational development will be taking place in the constituency of Brandon East? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** I thank the member for the question, gives me an opportunity to talk about the work that we're doing to repair the necessary services in Manitoba, and that includes five new schools in Budget 2018. And, in particular, the one in Brandon East, one that our government is very pleased to announce, a K-to-8 school to help the growing city of Brandon that has been badly needed for many years.

#### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to continuing with oral questions, we have some guests that have arrived in our gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

We have seated in the public gallery, from Major Pratt School, 37 grade 11 and 12 students under the direction of Tammy Edwards, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt).

On behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature. *[interjection]*

Order.

#### Manitoba's Carbon Pricing Plan Pay-as-You-Save Approach

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** One of the most disappointing parts of yesterday's budget is there were so many good ideas ignored and left off the table by this government. Carbon confusion doesn't even begin to summarize the disappointment outside of the Tory caucus.

Let's just look at what a pay-as-you-save approach could have done with the \$100 million that this government has allocated instead to a private bank account. *[interjection]*

\* (14:20)

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** If a pay-as-you-save loan system had been brought in, 10-year term, zero interest, that's \$100 million going to work for Manitobans helping them reduce the very same utility bills this

government is increasing. Under their plan, \$100 million is going to sit in a bank account for a year and generate zero money for action.

The Finance Minister needs to explain how zero million is better than \$100 million.

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development):** And the only carbon confusion there was was for 17 years when Manitoba—or, the former NDP government had tried to trick itself and Manitobans into believing that they had a carbon plan, a carbon-reduction plan that the Auditor General said it was not supported by a comprehensive analysis of different 'approaches'; they lacked implementation details, expected emission reduction and estimated costs.

Madam Speaker, the only time the NDP were able to reduce their carbon footprint in Manitoba was during a time of global recession. Our plan will reduce our carbon emissions over one megaton over five-year period. We're going to reduce our carbon footprint and grow the economy at the same time, something members opposite were unable to accomplish.

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

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I'm not surprised the Finance Minister isn't answering the question, but I'll try again. Let's keep going with this scenario.

At the start of year 2, our plan has invested—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** —\$100 million in climate action for Manitobans across the province, plus we have an additional \$10 million because over a 10-year term, 10 per cent of that money has come back. We then re-issue that \$10 million as a new pay-as-you-save loan at zero interest for 10 years. Meanwhile, the provincial Tory government has come up with its first \$5 million. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So far, as of the start of year 2, we have \$110 million of action at work for Manitobans, and they have five.

Could the Finance Minister please explain which number is bigger?

**Ms. Squires:** Well, I'm not even going to try to unpack the member's opposite NDP math.

What I will do is table for the House the annex that we had signed with the federal government when we signed onto the Pan-Canadian Framework that outlines many, many key initiatives that our governments are going to work toward in transitioning to the low-carbon future and lowering our carbon footprint in Manitoba. There's some great initiatives in here, much like our 65-page robust plan on reducing—our climate and green plan.

Our plan is going to reduce emissions and grow the economy, something they were unable to accomplish. We're on the right track.

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

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Once again, Manitobans are let down by this government. After the end of year 2 of our plan, we now have \$121 million available to help people retrofit their homes, to enable—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** —municipalities to move to electric buses, to help people across this province reduce their bills while this government has managed to raise only \$10 million under their plan.

I don't understand how they could possibly believe that \$10 million is going to accomplish what \$121 million would do when they're the ones spending \$100 million and sending a cheque off government records to a private foundation, whereas government here, under our plan, controls all the money and the direction and the future for future Manitobans.

Could they please explain how \$121 million is worse than \$10 million from their plan, Madam Speaker?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, that's a nice theoretical idea the member's got. Let's take a look at the record of the NDP. Manitobans pay and they play with the money.

Madam Speaker, 2011, they ran an election campaign: they walked, they knocked, they talked, they promised they wouldn't raise any taxes on Manitobans; 2012, they followed up with \$200 million of tax hikes—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —2013, they followed up with \$300 million of tax hikes. That's half a billion dollars they took off the kitchen tables of Manitobans, not

one buck, not one loonie, went into a conservation trust to help invest in the future of our environment.

We put \$102 million into a conservation trust, make a record investment in green, and he's got a better idea? I don't think so, Madam Speaker, not even close.

### **Health-Care Budget Women's Health Services**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Last year's budget saw the Health Minister cut lactation consultants, close the Mature Women's Centre, freeze the midwifery program and cut regional health authority budgets.

Now we see a Health budget that drastically cuts acute health-care services for women, freezes long-term-care funding for women seniors and slashes Pharmacare funding for drugs that women need.

Will the minister admit that this year's budget is more bad news for Manitoba women?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Well, Madam Speaker, if you need to take an ambulance you're going to be paying less than you were under the NDP. That's good news, I think.

Madam Speaker, if you rely on paramedic service there's 60 new full-time paramedics in this budget. That's good news.

If you're a parent, if you're an expectant mother, if you're having a newborn coming into the family, we now have screening, Madam Speaker, screening for newborn hearing and that's good news.

Madam Speaker, there's good news for health through all the budget. Unfortunate we have an NDP opposition that just can't hear it. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

Time for oral questions has expired.

### **PETITIONS**

#### **Vimy Arena**

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The residents of Assiniboia, St. James and the greater Winnipeg area and Manitoba are concerned

with the intention expressed by the City of Winnipeg to use the Vimy Arena site as an addiction treatment facility.

The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs, seniors–senior homes, and the City has not considered any better-suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface industrial park or the 200,000 acres at CentrePort.

The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from a park to commercial use to accommodate the addictions treatment facility and has not sought public input from the community to consider better uses for the facility consistent with a residential area.

The provincial licensing system is akin to that of a dentist's office and is clearly insufficient for the planned use of this site by the City and Province.

The proposed rezoning changes and the fundamental nature of the community, zoned as a park area, and the concerns of residents of St. James regarding safety, property values and their way of life has not been properly addressed.

The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue-collar, middle-class citizens who are family oriented towards children and seniors, and do not have the financial resources of other neighbourhoods.

This type of facility would never be considered for the popular Assiniboine Park nor Heubach Park between Park Boulevard east and west, even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.

The City and Province would be setting a dangerous precedent with this—quote, unquote—process that could put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without proper consultation.

\* (14:30)

The Province needs to be inclusive in its decision-making process and improve its programs to prevent drug abuse and better supervise provisions of drug prescriptions that could lead to addictive behaviour.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.

**Madam Speaker:** The member for Assiniboia has not read the petition as printed, and I would ask if there is leave to accept the petition as filed and as printed. *[Agreed]*

*TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:*

*The background to this petition is as follows:*

*1. The residents of Assiniboia, St. James, greater Winnipeg area and Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the City of Winnipeg (City) to use the Vimy Arena site as an addictions treatment facility.*

*2. The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes and the City has not considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface industrial park or the 20,000 acres at Centre Port.*

*3. The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from park to commercial use to accommodate the addiction treatment facility and has not sought public input from the community to consider better uses for this facility consistent with a residential area.*

*4. The provincial licensing system is akin to that as of a dentist's office and is clearly insufficient for the planned use of the site by the city and the province.*

*5. The proposed rezoning changes the fundamental nature of the community, zoned as a park area, and the concern of residents of St. James regarding safety, property values, and their way of life are not being properly addressed.*

*6. The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue collar, and middle class citizens who are family-oriented toward children and seniors, and do not have the financial resources of other neighborhoods.*

*7. This type of facility would never be considered for the popular Assiniboine park nor for Heubach Park (park between Park Blvd. east and west) even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.*

*8. The City and province would be setting a dangerous precedent with this "process" that could*

*put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without proper consultation.*

*9. The province needs to be inclusive in the decision making process and improve its programs to prevent drug abuse and better supervise the provision of drug prescriptions that could lead to addictive behaviour.*

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

*To urge the Provincial Government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.*

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

#### **Access to Health Care**

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-sorry-intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care; and,

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial human-health human

resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

#### **House Business**

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader):** While I have the floor, I would like to announce the resolution for next Tuesday.

Pursuant to rule 33(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere). The title of the resolution is Recognition of Wetland Importance.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that pursuant to rule 33(7), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Selkirk. The title of the resolution is Recognition of Wetland Importance.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker.

Would you call debate for the budget motion.

### **BUDGET DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)**

**Madam Speaker:** Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I rise to put a few words on the record about the document that was tabled yesterday, I believe it's called broken promises, in particular, breaking the promise to protect front-line services that the Conservatives made in the last election.

Manitoba families can't afford more of the Pallister government's cuts to front-line services, cuts to health care in particular, cuts to education and also cuts to infrastructure.



These are the services that Manitoba families rely on in order to stay healthy, in order to be able to create a good and meaningful life for themselves and, finally, are the backbones which allow for economic growth in our province here in Manitoba.

Now, we know that these deep and long-term cuts are being brought in even against a backdrop in which this government has access to increased sources of revenue. There is an increase to equalization payments from the federal government. There is increased access to the carbon revenues, though no countervailing action to make our province greener by this government. And, of course, we know that they will be accessing also new revenues with cannabis.

So funding for acute health care, first off, is effectively frozen under this budget. A 0.9 per cent increase that this government is bringing in is not enough to keep up with inflation, it's certainly not enough to keep up with health-care inflation and it is far less than the 3 per cent increase in health funding that this government received this year from the federal government. So it clearly seems as though the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government are intent on cutting back on these services at the expense of Manitoba families. And that's going to cause real and lasting impact to people in this province.

We know that in this de facto cut, contained within it are some specific decisions which are going to really impact people in our province in a negative way. There was some \$9 million cut from Pharmacare this year. We know that Pharmacare is the unfinished business of our provincial health-care system, of our universal health-care system here in Canada. It is something that New Democrats have been talking about for decades. Tommy Douglas, the greatest Canadian, a legendary New Democratic leader, actually was among the earliest, very strong proponents for universal pharmacare in this country.

So there's \$9 million less for this program at a time when people from many different walks of life are speaking out and saying that we should be moving in the opposite direction, we should be moving towards more drug coverage; \$9 million Pharmacare cut comes after a cut to the special drug program. Last week, we met people with cystic fibrosis who are going to be impacted by the ending of the special drug program. And we heard from some of them who spoke out in the media. I remember one person in particular—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

I'm having increasing difficulty hearing the member that has the floor for debate. There are a lot of conversations going on here, and I would ask people if they're having the conversations that they could please move to the loge or to the chairs at the back of the room and have the courtesy to allow the member that has the floor to be heard.

**Mr. Kinew:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]* Pardon me?

**An Honourable Member:** Unfortunately, I'm not.

**Mr. Kinew:** Not what?

**An Honourable Member:** Not so close to you. I'm listening to everything—

**Mr. Kinew:** Oh, okay. Good. Thanks. Unlimited time, so I've got all the time in the world.

So, again, we heard from people last week in this Chamber who are going to be impacted by the ending of the special drug program, the cut to the special drug program—as my colleague from River Heights put it, the elimination of the special drug program.

So one man in particular said, well, if I miss my medication for a few days, don't worry about it; I won't have to take my medication any more after that.

And that, very clearly, outlines the scale of the challenge that he's facing as a result of this Premier's cuts to health care, this Minister of Health's cuts to health care in our province. We know that cystic fibrosis, it's a very damaging condition. It is terminal. It's a congenital condition that people are born with, and many people afflicted by this disease do not live past their 30th birthday, unfortunately.

\* (14:40)

However, recently, advances in medical science have allowed to—for the creation of new classes of drugs which are able to treat people with specific sorts of genetic markers which indicate cystic fibrosis. However, since these drugs, I guess, rely on a ton of research and development in order to be able to brought to market and they apply only to a relatively small subset of the population, they're very expensive. Basically, it's like having to buy a new house every year and the cost of some of these drugs being hundreds of thousands of dollars each and every year.

And so we were talking about what the impact is going to be by the ending of the special drug program to one man. His name is Devin Rey, and what he was telling me is that before the Pallister government ended this program he had been planning to get married. His fiancée and him were set up in a new house. However, when they received the letter maybe about a month ago, just over a month ago that the special drug program would be ending, they have been forced to move out of the house and downsize into an apartment. After taking a look at their household finances, Devin and his fiancée have also have to put off their plans to get married, and so they won't be getting married this year. They won't be having the wedding that they had been saving up for. Rather, the money that they had saved for their wedding is now going to have to pay for the life-saving medication that Devin needs just to stay alive.

That is the face of this government's agenda on health care. That is the face of the impact that these cuts are having: young Manitobans looking to put roots down in our province, looking to make a good life for themselves, you know, looking to make the most of this time that we have here on earth. Instead, the money that was supposed to be allowing them to live their life to the fullest and make those moves towards living a happy and fulfilling life are now going to be spent just on staying alive. To me that doesn't seem to match up with the Canadian values that prize our universal health-care system, the Manitoba values that say that when our neighbour or the people that we care about fall on hard times that we ought to help them and we ought to be there for them.

So I am speaking out about this because I do believe that the cancellation of the special drug program and that this cut—this \$9-million cut to Pharmacare are wrong. For people like Devin, for people like those with cystic fibrosis, people with some of the other diseases and conditions who will be losing coverage for the medication that they need to stay alive or to have a good quality of life, for some of those folks it might be a life-and-death issue. For other folks it's a quality-of-life issue, but for each and every one of us in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, the issue of Pharmacare is a moral issue, and we should be standing up and doing what's right.

Premier's (Mr. Pallister) attack on the health-care system has been evidenced by, you know, underspending the health-care budget by some

\$175 million. We know that the list of services which have been ended or cut by this government, it seemed to grow by the day over the last year. We saw that physiotherapy, out-patient physiotherapy, occupational therapy was cut by this government.

We saw that lactation consultants, which are there to help not only increase the connection between babies and moms when the baby's first born but also to improve the long-term health of the child to be able to get the child on the right footing so that they'll be able to enjoy better educational outcomes and better health outcomes over the rest of their lives, we know that that program was also ended.

We know that there are many projects such as the CancerCare building and personal-care homes that were put on hold or outright cancelled, and we now know that, you know, some of these communities that had planned to build personal-care homes are now being forced into, you know, going back to their citizens for new sources of revenue, taking out loans and all sorts of things just because this government won't invest in helping people to stay healthy at home.

What's particularly bothersome about this short-sighted approach to health care, these short-sighted cuts to our health-care system is that we know that while it represents a cut in year in the expenditures in the Health Department, in the long term it will lead to higher costs for health care in Manitoba.

If a young mom is not able to, you know, teach the baby how to latch properly, then that child may have worse health outcomes and, over the course of the coming decades, have to rely on the public-health system in our province more and more.

If a senior citizen who is coming out of knee surgery, after which they need physiotherapy—it's not optional, they need physiotherapy. If a senior coming out of surgery for their knee doesn't get that physio because they can't afford it, they're at increased risk of re-injury. They are going to potentially have to have another surgery done; potentially, they are going to have longer stays in the hospital; potentially, there could be complications. All those things will cost more and more on our health-care system in the long run.

And then when we think of a young person like Devin, the sorts of drugs that treat cystic fibrosis—you know, this disease slowly progressively taking away someone's ability to breath—if he is able to

access the drugs that he had under the special drug program, it would stop that 3 per cent decrease in lung function each year. It would stop it in its tracks and allow him to live a good life. However, in the absence of that, if people are forced to do without, then potentially that means longer hospital stays.

I spoke to another, you know, young man. He was there with us that day, and he said that he had received a double lung transplant I believe. But up until his lung transplant he had spent accumulative three and a half years of his life in hospitals this guy being in his early 20s. So if you can imagine the amount of days and the amount of time that he spent in the hospital over the course of his time here on Earth, it really hits home. It really illustrates the scale of what's happening here.

And so these short-sighted cuts in the health-care system are going to lead to increased expenditures in the health-care system. But, perhaps more seriously, it's also going to have an impact on the lives of many people in our province. And that's just not right, and that's why we're opposing this budget.

Now, on the education side, we know that the capital budget for K to 12 was underspent by \$81 million, and what they have announced for school funding this year will not be enough to keep up with the rate of inflation. In fact, when we look at education funding as a percentage of GDP we see that there is a downward trajectory made particularly worse by the decisions of this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this Education Minister.

Now, what that means is that there is going to be less resources for the kids in class while they're trying to learn. And, even though I've been asking for more than a year, I have yet to meet a parent who has told me that they want their kid to have less one-on-one time with their teacher.

I've asked the minister, does he know any parents who say that they want their kid to have less one-on-one time with their teacher? He's been unable to point me in the direction of anyone like that. I've asked the same of the Premier. The Premier's been unable to identify any parents who want their child to have less one-on-one time with their teacher. And yet, with enrolment growing up—enrolment going up, school funding going down relative to inflation, we know that class sizes are increasing under this government's watch. And so their plan for K to 12 won't work and will actually hurt the educational outcomes for people in our province.

At the post-secondary level, there is not just a de facto cut but, after freezing post-secondary funding, they are now handing down an actual cut, a \$5-million cut to post-secondary institutions in our province. And that is going to mean at this point that colleges and universities here in Manitoba are going to have to start closing programs. They are going to have to start laying off staff, instructors, faculty members, and that will have an impact on students. Potentially, it could disrupt students with their programs of study, delay graduation dates, perhaps it will mean that students have to move out of province after programs that they may want to access are discontinued. And it will definitely mean that class sizes at the post-secondary level go up, even though one of the competitive advantages that Manitoba post-secondaries have is that they can typically offer more one-on-one time with their instructors.

\* (14:50)

So, if these education cuts weren't bad enough, Madam Speaker, we ought to also remember that this is happening at a time when the unemployment rate in our province is higher than it has been in recent memory. When this government took office, Manitoba's unemployment rate was the second-best in the country, and now it's the middle of the pack. So, again, we see another trend line moving in the opposite direction under this government.

And what's their response? Well, their response is to cut the education and training programs that Manitobans need in order to qualify for their first job; or to be able to upgrade and switch professions in the middle of their careers; or, in the case of what is the reality for many, many families in our province and across the North, when people are put out of work, they need these sorts of post-secondary training programs and education programs in order to retrain to be able to re-enter the workforce or access new educational opportunities. And so there doesn't seem to be much of a plan to deal with the issues we're having with the unemployment rate here in the province.

Again, there's \$150 million gone from the highways budget; \$150 million out of infrastructure spending has been cut this year, Madam Speaker. Not only should Manitoba families think about this now that the snow is melting and the potholes are beginning to appear, and I'm sure many people will start to complain about the roads in our city here, on the highways in our province—many families will complain about that—and they should remember that

this government is reducing by \$150 million money that should be going to fixing those roads, that should be going to fixing those highways, that should be going to fixing those streets.

But, again, in a context with an unemployment rate that has not been this high in a generation, we ought to remember that's also \$150 million less in economic activity that's going to happen in our province this year because, again, infrastructure investments are among the most effective forms of mobilizing job creation in terms of direct public sector expenditures. So that's \$150 million less in economic activity, \$150 million less to put people to work, \$150 million less for jobs in our province.

And so with the unemployment rate being high as it is, and with us falling back in the interprovincial rankings, we ought to remember that this government is not using the tools at its disposal to help Manitoba families work.

The reason why that's a problem is because everybody in our province deserves to work, not just because it helps to put food on the table, but because having a job provides dignity, discipline, self-respect. It's one of our, you know, ways in our society that we can help people achieve self-sufficiency, and not only is that good for financial independence, but it's also good for emotional fulfillment, right, and this government should be doing more.

And then, when it comes to the gas tax that this Province is bringing in, it really puzzles me, the approach that they've taken. The average family is going to be paying some \$300 more per year just to be able to drive to work, to drive the kids to hockey, drive the kids to soccer, drive the kids to dance, musical theatre, whichever sort of activities their families are involved in, and against that backdrop, the purpose of this revenue is supposed to be to help people transition towards making more environmentally friendly choices, and yet they're going to have \$300 less per year at their disposal in order to make those more environmentally friendly choices.

So, as a price signal, economically speaking, it's counterintuitive, it's ineffective, it's sending the reverse message to Manitoba families that it's supposed to be doing, and, at the same time, there's no counterpart in terms of an assistance program or some sort of rebate or some sort of incentive that would help the average family to be able to switch to more green transportation or maybe to be able to take transit or maybe to be able to make the sort of

changes to their home heating program that could allow them to be more energy efficient.

So this is an issue that I think will really start to hit home to Manitobans over the course of this year. And, as they realize that they're paying more and more money out of pocket, there's a bigger, bigger hit on their debit cards—and, in some cases, even their credit cards—as a result of this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) decision making, they ought also remind themselves that some of the biggest corporations in our province will be paying nothing in the form of a carbon price. So, as life gets less and less affordable for the average person, there's no counterpart in terms of the corporate—the large corporations in our province having to do the same thing. So that doesn't make much sense.

Now, when we think about it in context—the national context, right now there is a federal government that is doing some positive things and some not-so-positive things. But one of the things that I think they've created an opportunity for is to really embrace universal pharmacare. And so they send a—you know—signal that they're interested in pursuing pharmacare in the most recent budget—federal budget, that is. However, the federal minister walked it back the next day and said, no, we're just going to, you know, maybe fill in some gaps with drug coverage in certain areas.

What I see there is it's an opportunity. You know, the Prime Minister, the federal Cabinet is thinking about pharmacare, but we should really have leadership at the provincial level pushing them, pushing them towards the thing that they want to do. They want to bring in a universal pharmacare, it's just that they perhaps lack the courage to be able to declare that right now. Well, it would be great to see leadership at the provincial level urging them to do so and bringing resources to the table so a province like Manitoba could actually implement a universal pharmacare program. So, again, that is what is needed, and we see that sort of leadership at the provincial level absent from this budget.

So, when we look at all these things taken together, we ought to recognize that this budget is going to hurt Manitoba families. It's going to make life less affordable for people in our province. It is going to impact the services that they rely on, the schools that our children go to. It's going to impact the hospitals that care for our loved ones when they're ill. And it's going to impact some of the community-based services like mental health or drug

coverage that we rely on in order to have a good state of wellbeing.

And so I don't believe that this budget—or, by extension, this government—is in the best interests of the people of this province. And that's why I meet—my colleagues and I will be voting against it, if it passes in its current form.

However, enterprising opposition that we are, we are going to propose some amendments that would actually create a context by which we might be able to pursue a better economic plan, a better jobs plan, better health plan, better education plan for people in this province.

And so I'm going to move this amendment and, hopefully, we get support from all MLAs—who, I'm sure, are going to have to have a tough time defending this document in their constituencies later on this year. But hopefully we get everyone to support this, and then we can turn the page on this budget and move towards something much better.

So I move, seconded by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan),

*THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:*

therefore regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) breaking the Premier's promise to protect front-line services by making deep cuts to health and education despite unprecedented new revenues from the Premier's gas tax; and
- (b) continuing the Premier's attack on the health-care system by underspending the health-care budget by \$175 million, freezing acute-care services, cutting long-term-care supports, doctor recruitment programs, mental health and addiction services while wasting millions on endless reports by high-priced consultants; and
- (c) cutting funds for Pharmacare even though there is a unique opportunity right now to pressure the federal government to invest in a true universal national pharmacare program; and
- (d) underspending the education capital budget for K to 12 by \$81 million and failing to keep school spending at least up to the rate of inflation; and

- (e) cutting post-secondary education by millions while increasing tuition rates for parents and students and planning critical changes to student aid that could limit access for thousands of students; and

\* (15:00)

- (f) failing to provide a comprehensive jobs plan that gives more families access to good-paying, non-precarious jobs, cutting supports for apprenticeships and training while standing idly by as Manitoba's unemployment rate rose to become higher than the Canadian average for the first time in a generation; and
- (g) cutting over \$150 million in infrastructure spending, 25 per cent of the flood protection budget with no mention of the Town of Churchill or supports for mining jobs in the North; and
- (h) forcing regular Manitoba families to pay hundreds of dollars more this year in the Premier's gas tax with no tax relief in 2018 while letting big corporate polluters off the hook.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), seconded by the honourable member for Minto,

*THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:*

therefore regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) breaking the Premier's promise to protect front-line services by making deep cuts to health and education despite unprecedented new revenues from the Premier's gas tax; and
- (b) continuing the Premier's attack on the health-care system by underspending the health-care budget by \$175 million, freezing acute-care services, cutting long-term-care supports, doctor recruitment programs, mental health and addictions services while wasting millions on endless reports by high-priced consultants; and

- (c) cutting funds for Pharmacare even though there is a unique opportunity right now to pressure the federal government to invest in a true universal national pharmacare program; and
- (d) underspending the education capital budget for K to 12 by \$81 million and failing to keep school spending at least up to the rate of inflation; and
- (e) cutting post-secondary education by millions while increasing tuition rates for parents and students, and planning critical changes to Student Aid that could limit access for thousands of students; and
- (f) failing to provide a comprehensive jobs plan that gives more families access to good-paying, non-precarious jobs, cutting supports for apprenticeships and training while standing idly by as Manitoba's unemployment rate rose to become higher than the Canadian average for the first time in a generation; and
- (g) cutting over \$150 million in infrastructure spending, 25 per cent of the flood-protection budget, with no mention of the Town of Churchill or supports for mining jobs in the North; and
- (h) forcing regular Manitoba families to pay hundreds of dollars more this year in the Premier's gas tax with no gas relief in 2018 while letting big corporate polluters off the hook.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

The amendment is in order and the floor is open for debate.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It gives me great pleasure to stand up today and put a few words on the record not speaking in favour of the amendment brought forward by the member from Fort Rouge, but for the great budget brought forward by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), Treasury Board, Cabinet and, matter of fact, Madam Speaker, all of the members of the PC caucus and the government of Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition started off by—in traditional NDP fashion—standing up and putting just complete wrong messages on the record, and that's

by—going by what the name of the document is, and here the document that I'm speaking to today, Budget 2018, is Keeping our promises: Real progress for Manitobans

*Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Now, keeping our promises is the key to this document, because I know that the member from Fort Rouge and his colleagues, the ones that are still left from the 2016 election and some of those that were still in previous to that, I know that they have a lot of experience in absolutely breaking promises.

And it's for those types of reasons that we are in that fiscal mess that we are in today, and I, again, commend all the members of our government trying to correct the course. And we've already see that we've already turned the tide and—as opposed to the bleeding of finances escaping this province and just the previous NDP government taking us deeper and deeper and deeper in debt and deficit.

Since the 2016 election, we have been saying on our side of the House that after a decade of debt, we are going to be fixing the finances. Madam Speaker, it's time to start talking about the why. We are going to be bringing stability back to Manitobans and for Manitobans. With that, we were also saying that after a decade of decay that we were going to be repairing the services. And so with that, we need to also be starting to talk about the why. And that's to bring the security back to Manitobans that they so desperately needed over the last 17-plus years.

And, thirdly, we are talking about, after a decade of decline, we are going to have to rebuild the economy. And with that, Madam Speaker, and what we've been seeing—I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I didn't see the changeover in the Chair—so with that, the third thing, and I'll repeat this, that we consistently have been saying, is that over a decade of decline we were have—going to be having to rebuild the economy. And with that, we're creating opportunities. That is the why, is creating opportunity.

And we've seen some absolutely fantastic announcements in the last—within the last year in regards to the agriculture industry. And we're basically showing not only Manitobans but Canadians and the rest of the world that Manitoba is open for business, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With the investments that we've seen in Roquette and the most recent announcements with Simplot, we see that the open-for-business sign on the province of Manitoba

is absolutely starting to hit home throughout the world, and we will see further and further investments and businesses and companies coming to this great province of ours as the time continues.

I did want to speak about a few different things that we brought forward in the budget. I've—as I've already said, under the previous government, the NDP, they broke many, many promises, and they didn't have a revenue problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they actually had a spending problem. And we saw that if we would not have won in the 2016 election, then we would've seen, probably by the 2019-2020 budget year, we would've seen the NDP's deficit grow to approximately \$1.7 billion. They were far spending more than what they were bringing in, and, unfortunately, that was the tide, and that's basically what we were—we had inherited.

The—under the guidance and leadership of our Premier (Mr. Pallister), the member from Fort Whyte, and the Finance Minister and the hard work of our ND—of our PC caucus team, we were—managed to turn that canoe around and start going towards balance. We've stopped the bleeding and we've gone from, when we've taken over, to just about—just under \$900 million of a deficit, and now the Finance Minister tabled this great budget, the best budget in the history of the Province of Manitoba, and we're looking at the 2018-2019 having a deficit of about \$521 million, which, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is on track and, matter of fact, more on track to get to our promise of balancing the books within our first two terms.

\*(15:10)

I'd like to thank the support of my colleagues that are in the House today and I just—I want to make a quick comment in regards to—I know the member from Fort Rouge stood up and he basically patted himself on the back for having unlimited time to speak to the budget, and under the old rules that we used to have unlimited time, of course, means unlimited time. Under the old rules before the last election we actually, as members in the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were able to speak for 30 minutes, and the leader of the NDP party, the member from Fort Rouge, barely spoke for 25 minutes on his unlimited time. And so what that tells me is he really doesn't have too much bad to say about this budget and so that's why he sat down in a very expedited fashion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to read a little bit of an excerpt from the speech for Budget 2018

that the Finance Minister had said, and I think that not only members on our side of the House, but also opposition members and independent members should take the Hansard and repeat some of these words, tweet about it, put it on Facebook, snapchat it—whatever they want, stand on the top of the Legislature and repeat a lot of these things so that all Manitobans hear the good news that is coming forward in the next—within the next year and many years to come.

So from the speech, and I quote from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen): Through a combination of measures that I will outline in a moment, we are projecting a summary deficit of \$521 million for the 2018-19 fiscal year—a reduction of more than \$200 million over the current fiscal year. We promise to make Manitoba Canada's most improved province and we are delivering on that promise.

We are on schedule to reduce the PST during our first term and deliver a balanced budget during our second term. We're keeping the promises we made to Manitobans.

We're fixing our finances so that Manitobans will have greater stability.

We're repairing our services so that Manitobans will have greater security and we are rebuilding our economy so that Manitobans will have greater opportunity.

The result will be a safer, stronger, more secure Manitoba for all Manitobans. End quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think those are very wise words and I know that for years to come many sitting MLAs and people in the public, great Manitobans are going to be touting those words and seeing the results of all the hard work of this PC government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to also mention some of the highlights of the budget.

As I have already mentioned, I—it is very important, and you've heard this within the media and you've heard this throughout Manitoba, is that it is important to have a plan and to have a plan to get closer and to balance the books, because as we've seen in the previous NDP government's reign over this province for 17 years, they had actually more than doubled the provincial debt, and with that doubling of the debt they also managed to take Manitoba Hydro and drive its debt into some pretty dark

places, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in order to service that debt we've seen some credit downgrades because of the actions or the inactions of the former NDP government and with that comes a billion-dollar price tag for servicing that debt. And what can't—what can we not spend that billion dollars on? We can't spend that billion dollars on health care, infrastructure, education.

These are the important priorities of Manitobans, and it's because that NDP government under Greg Selinger, the same Greg Selinger that the member from Fort Rouge backed—I said backed—in the 2016 election whereas today we know the real reasons why the member from St. Boniface, the former premier, has now left the Legislative Assembly is because I think, as well as many other Manitobans, is that the backing that he was providing in the 2016 election to the member from Fort Rouge, he suffered from some backstabbing most recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that will be something that the member from Fort Rouge will have to try to rebrand, as we're seeing him trying to rebrand himself in the most recent days in regards to his own image. And it's—so far he's actually gone to distancing himself from the NDP party, whereas some of the literature that he has mailed out has no signs of the fact that he is a member of the NDP party, much like the member from Elmwood; during the last campaign he tried to distance himself in the 2016 election and basically took over stickers over his sign and he was the representative for the Louise Bridge party, so quite comical. But it's—he's back in here; he was elected again by narrow margins. But he's here, he survived, he's a survivor. He's a survivor and I now that when the member from Elmwood gets up and puts a few words on the record, it's not just going to be a few words. I think he holds some kind of record in federal politics for the amount of words he puts on the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the—I wanted to mention something about red tape, because I know that the previous NDP government felt that it was their duty to 'stifen', to stifle—to increase the amount of red tape. And so in this budget we are doubling the budget of the Regulatory Accountability Secretariat which increases it by \$172,000. We are keeping our promise to reduce red tape and be accountable to the public for the regulations that Manitoba must comply with. That's why we are Canada's most improved province with an A grade from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for regulatory accountability.

It is only by measuring and tracking what government does that will allow us to improve services and make good decisions for the public. Our efforts in this area are reducing the burden for Manitobans, non-profits, charities and businesses. Already CFIB has indicated small business owners are spending \$80 million less every year to comply with paperwork from all levels of government.

Under the NDP, Manitoba was the worst province in Canada for regulatory accountability, receiving an F grade on CFIB's 2016 provincial red tape report card. That's because they failed to create an efficient, effective and transparent regulatory system, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In health care, we have now, under the Minister of Health, have the largest amount of dollars ever in the history of Manitoba dedicated towards our health-care system. Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One thing that I definitely did want to highlight, and I am going to mention this in regards to the enhancing the Manitoba newborn screening program with an increased investment of \$421,000 to Cadham Provincial Laboratory.

\*(15:20)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that for years the previous member for Riding Mountain, Ms. Leanne Rowat, championed this private member's bill, which the NDP talked out each and every time, and it was shameful. She had brought forward that bill before the 2011 election, and I watched as parents would come to the gallery and they would talk about if only their child would have been diagnosed or had some screening for their hearing earlier.

But perseverance paid off and so Leanne Rowat was the champion behind the Manitoba newborn screening program, and so I just wanted to put a few words on the record and commemorate Ms. Rowat. And I know that the now-sitting member for Riding Mountain is going to do an absolute fantastic job in her place. He already has.

With those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the—that other people, my colleagues, would like to put a few words on the record, as well.

I would like to thank my association, the Lac du Bonnet constituency association, as well as all my constituents in the Lac du Bonnet constituency for re-electing me in the 2016 election. It is truly an



honour to be able to come to work to the Manitoba Legislature every day.

And the—I'd also like to take some time to thank my family who have been majorly supportive in this new career. *[interjection]*

And I know it's sounding like to me that the member from Louise Bridge—I'm sorry, no, the member from Elmwood would like to potentially get up and put a few words on the record. I know he's gearing up.

**An Honourable Member:** You're going to be sorry asking for that.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I know, I know. The member from Minto says I'm going to be sorry for asking for that, but we're all going to feel that pain in a few minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to be voting for Budget 2018. I will be strongly encouraging all members of the House to vote against the proposed amendment brought forward by the member from Fort Rouge and, again, I encourage all members in the House to vote in favour of Budget 2018. It is the best budget the province of Manitoba has seen.

So, with those—thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

Before we continue, I just want to remind members, if they're going to refer to any other members in the House, that they refer them by their constituency name or by the minister's department.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** So I'm pleased to stand in the House today and offer just a little bit of words in respect of Budget 2018, which only members opposite could stand in this House and actually proudly tout this budget as the best budget in Manitoba's history.

Clearly, they haven't read it and clearly they don't know the impact that this budget, alongside the other two budgets that we've seen, the impact that it is having on Manitoba families. And, again, every time we have to talk about one of these budgets, the narrative inevitably happens to be one of the stresses that I know, for my constituency of St. Johns, that there are a variety of St. Johns constituents that are under an enormous amount of stress in a variety of different ways because of the choices that this—and, actually, let me just put on the record—actually, the cold and calculated, uncompassionate choices that

this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government and his caucus are making in respect of the budget for Manitoba. And that is something that on this side of the House we care very deeply about, the stress that Manitobans are under.

And so it really is kind of mind-boggling that the members are so proud and actually have the—I guess I don't even know what to say—the audacity to say that this is the best budget in the history of the province. It is not. Let me put that on the record. It absolutely is not the best budget. And it continues the Premier's attack on front-line services. It continues the Premier's, I guess, need to break his promises that he made in the last election. And it is making deep, long-term cuts to services that I rely on, that everybody in this House relies on, but, more importantly, that Manitobans rely on, and again, with little concern or little compassion or little caring from the Premier.

So, you know, what have we seen in this particular 2018 budget? Well, it is a continuation of what the Premier has done thus far. I'm going to concentrate a little bit on Health and what this budget does or doesn't do. We know that, according to the budget document, the Health spending will increase by only 0.9 per cent, which inevitably results in cuts, and we know that that is because it is lower than the rate of inflation. And, you know, this budget imposes a de facto cut on Manitoba's most important priority, and that's the health care.

We know that while, again, members opposite want to kind of, you know, live in la-la land in respect of the numbers, the numbers don't lie, and here's what their Premier, their boss, has done. He is underspending his Health capital budget by \$175 million, which is delaying ER expansions and cancelling important projects for CancerCare and new personal-care-home beds. And so I think it's important to put on the record what Sandi Mowat from the Manitoba Nurses Union stated, and I quote: I'm worried because there is a trend towards non-investment in health care and prevention. They—the Pallister government—are talking a lot about acute care, but they're not putting any money into that. They are also not talking about any kind of prevention that will keep people out of hospitals and healthy at home. End quote.

I think that's pretty significant that Mrs. Mowat would say that, and clearly she would know better than anybody in this Chamber, you know, how these—this budget or the lack of investments and how

that will translate in respect of patient care. So I do want to take a moment actually just to acknowledge Sandi and the important work that she does and, you know, attempting to fight for everybody's families, including the members in this House, whether or not they want her help or not, she is fighting for their families as well. So I do want to just take a moment to honour her. She is quite an extraordinary woman, a strong woman, and I really do appreciate the work that she does on behalf of all of us.

So we know that, you know, by laying off health-care workers, cutting nearly \$9 million to Pharmacare and cutting primary-care services like the special drug program and occupational and physiotherapy and closing down hospitals, the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) cuts have already hurt patients and will actually end up costing the health-care system more in the long run; so counterintuitive in respect of people's house-health that you would actually cut services that will help them to maintain health and keep health and live healthy lives outside of the services, front-line services, which are, as we know, a lot more expensive to upkeep and maintain. So it is quite short-sighted and counterintuitive on the part of the Premier, and, again, I would suggest to you, goes to, you know, kind of this uncaring budget.

\* (15:30)

So we know that yesterday's budget, as well, clearly, clearly made it that seniors' health is not a priority for this government. That is so apparent in this new budget. You know—and then we know that there are cuts to important personal-care-home projects and that the budget cut nearly \$2.5 million from long-care—long-term-care services and that there was not even one mention of a new PCH bed in this budget. Again, I don't—I would suggest to you that there's not many families that would suggest that this was the best budget in Manitoba's history, when there's no commitment or no real robust infrastructure or commitment into personal-care-home beds.

And I would say that everybody in this Chamber and everybody in Manitoba would want the opportunity for their loved one to be able to get the support that they deserve as they're, you know, getting to the end or near the end of their lives, to live comfortably and safely in their own homes or with, you know, with their families and not have to worry about financials. And so what we've seen is that to that end, the Premier already cut the Hospital

Home Team and privatized parts of our Home Care system, which is costing seniors more. And we've actually been hearing so many stories of families that are concerned for their mother or their father who are not, you know—used to get a little more services in respect of Home Care. And now we've heard, I mean, time and time again, so many instances where individuals who are at home, they're coming for maybe 20 minutes and they are giving them their medication, and that's it; they're leaving because there's not—because there's been those cuts and there's not those home-care workers to go around to keep up with the needs that we have.

So, certainly, I think that one of the consequences of that is that this Pallister government is actually creating a two-tiered, American-style home-care system, and—which inevitably leads to few and few—fewer seniors living at home and more worry on behalf of the—of their families.

And, so, again, you know, despite the Premier promising to build 1,200 beds during the 2016 election, we still have not seen one single bed in 2016-17. And, again, this budget, we see no plans to build more, and I—which, as our population ages and those demographics go up, it is just going to create more and more strain on an already strained system and, again, you know, strain on a system that, you know, we should be caring for our elders that contributed to this province and contributed to the wealth and production of this province, and instead we're turning our backs on them. Well, we're not; the Premier is turning his backs on those individuals that, you know, gave their life to this province.

We know that the Premier has cancelled PCH beds in Transcona, in Bridgwater, in Lac du Bonnet, which is leaving millions of dollars raised by those communities unspent, again, I would suggest to you, illustrative of that the Premier does not make seniors a priority for his government.

And we know that the Premier cut rehabilitation therapy for seniors who are recovering in hospitals and reduced the coverage for chiropractic care. He not only did that, he doubled fees for seniors in long care—long-term care, and which is—I mean, everybody should realize how extremely problematic that it is—that is when most seniors lived on—live on a fixed income.

He cut the caregiver tax credit, which is making life less affordable for seniors. He cancelled a subsidy that helped family members accompany northern seniors travelling to Winnipeg for care.

That, I think, is still so mind-boggling that—why somebody would cut that subsidy to allow somebody to travel with an aging parent or relative.

So—I think even if we were just to look at seniors, I would suggest to this House and to members opposite that seniors certainly would not think that this was the best budget in Manitoba's history. In fact, I think that they would think it was quite egregious and disrespectful and really concerning to their overall health. I mean, there's so much to discuss here.

So we know that, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) continues to look at 'prioritizing' cutting costs over keeping Manitobans healthy and safe. This budget cut hundreds of thousands of dollars from physician recruitment programs when we already know that there's a doctor shortage crisis, particularly in the rural and northern Manitoba, and reducing Manitobans' access to the care that they need, which is already difficult in rural and northern areas that are quite isolated. So to be able to cut those hundreds of thousands of dollars certainly impacts on that.

We know that the Premier's made it harder for rural Manitobans to access care when there is a shortage of paramedics and he closed 23 EMS stations last year.

And I know that the minister keeps touting the 60 EMS full-time paramedic positions, but I think it's important to put on the record here, again, something that I—for—something that a woman said, Michelle Gawronsky, president of the MGEU, who I have a lot of respect for, who works so, so hard for her members and for their families. I have an enormous amount of respect for her as well. And I quote: With the EMS stations closing, do they know how they're going to deliver ambulance services outside the city of Winnipeg? Manitoba does go beyond the Perimeter. And she goes on to say, how are we ensuring that the ambulance that—the ambulance there is to provide the services that Manitoba needs? Rural Manitoba is affected greatly with the shortages of EMS, so 60 full-time paramedic positions will be created, but that's not even a dent in the 456 shortage. End quote.

So I think that that's important to put that on the record, that while the minister got up today and was so excited about his announcement for 60 full-time paramedic positions, it's certainly not even a drop in the bucket to what we need, and when you juxtapose that to the fact that they're actually cutting EMS

stations I don't think that there's a net gain, not even in the slightest.

We know that which is continuing with the Premier's budgets, the Premier has already contributed—or laid off at least 228 front-line health-care workers since he took office and, certainly, this budget, because it is—there is significant decreases in dollars that are going to health care, will contribute to that laying off of front-line health-care workers as well.

There's so much to go over here in such a limited time, sorry.

So I think it's important, again, to talk about some of the things that we've seen in respect of women's health care and how the—we don't even see any of those investments in health in respect of women.

So we know that the last budget, when the Premier imposed an \$80 million—over \$80 million in cuts to the WRHA, he cut \$160,000 from the Mature Woman's Centre and, again, I know that I've spoken quite often about that centre; I think it was quite an extraordinary centre with extraordinary people that work there and that which served over 5,000 women just last year.

\*(15:40)

We know that he's contributed to 300 million—cut \$300 million for a new CancerCare Manitoba headquarters, and this just continues along the same path of cuts for health care.

And I think, you know, what we've seen in the last little bit here in respect of the special drug program and the Pharmacare program—and I do want to point out something that the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) was bringing up in respect of, you know, the very really impacts in respect of these cuts that the Premier seems to think is fine, and how that impacts that now, you know, the member for Fort Rouge was talking about a young couple who are no longer able to get married because they have to now put that on to the side so that he—they can afford the life-saving drugs that he needs and now is no longer cut.

And I don't know how anybody who gets elected in this House can think that that is, in any way, shape or form, a good thing or that that is part of a—the greatest budget in Manitoba history. It simply is not. It is so egregious that, you know, people now have to pay for life-saving drugs and I think that that is the

salient point. We're not talking about, you know, drugs that you can take if you want but they don't really—you don't really need them. We're talking about people's lives and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) cut those so that people have to make really hard decisions and struggle, and I can only imagine the financial constraint and financial burden that will put on families and young families and individuals.

And so, you know, we see, as well, coupled with that, the Premier has cut nearly \$9 million from Pharmacare for everyday Manitobans, making it harder to access those life-saving drugs.

And I don't know if members opposite—I would imagine members opposite know folks who have to make those type of decisions. I know that on this side of the House we've had many, many folks from our own constituencies who have reached out to talk about how these cuts are impacting on them and, you know, I know that the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) has spoken about it in question period about the decisions that that means. That means, you know, do you eat today or do you not, or do you, you know, not pay your rent fully or pay your rent at all? And again, we're not talking about drugs that people don't need. They need them.

And again, I started this by saying that members opposite stand here proud, stating that this is the best budget in Manitoba's history. It is a budget that is severely and negatively impacting on Manitoba's most vulnerable. And so, you know, I think it is incumbent on the members in this Chamber to tell their Premier that, in fact, it's not the best budget, it's actually one of the—I don't know if it's the worst budget, because I don't know—I don't have all that knowledge in respect of what Filmon did. But certainly I would say that in the last many years this is—and again is just building on the last budgets that this Premier has done, but it is certainly the worst budget in a generation.

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

**Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture):** I want to start by thanking the good people of Lakeside for the opportunity to be the third MLA in Lakeside in 96 years. It's a real pleasure to—*[interjection]* No, no, no. Actually, I had hair when I ran in 2003, and some of that's kind of 'fellen' out over the years, but it wasn't from stress, though. It was just from being able to serve and maybe tossing and turning the odd night, but I can certainly tell you

what a pleasure it is to stand in this Chamber and recognize those good folks.

And I know I was asked several times when—over the times when I'm out in my riding talking about why did I get involved in politics. I think everybody in this room does it for one reason only, and that's to try and make Manitoba a better place to live, work and play. And that's really what my 15th budget over my time being in this Chamber—I'm pleased to say that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and our government did an outstanding job in bringing forward the changes for our government.

We are making Manitoba a better place in working as a team to deliver on the priorities for Manitobans, such as enhancing education, ensuring everyone receives the best care when in need and putting hard-earned money back into Manitoba's pockets.

I would be remiss also if I did not recognize my family. A few weeks back I know that my wife and I don't get a lot of time to see each other, being a minister. I know the member from Minto can appreciate the timelines we put in as ministers, but I can tell you that my family has been so supportive over the time that I've been in government as a minister, and I thank my family for that. It's a real reward to be able to look at them once in a while and think, well, we're making a bit of a difference. And we hope that the changes we make will benefit all Manitobans not now but going to the future.

I know that most members of this House realize that I'm always on the go; I'm going somewhere or talking to different folks. And I can tell you that, specifically in the agriculture sector, I've heard a lot of supporting comments about what our government's doing, unleashing some of the red-tape barriers that are in the way of good business, and, of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention that the Premier coming from an agricultural background certainly helps agriculture immensely. And I want to assure that everybody in this province recognizes the importance of agriculture, and, of course, farming continues to be an economic driver for Manitoba's economy. And, as the Minister of Finance noted just a few weeks ago, agriculture is strong in Manitoba.

For many producers it was a tremendous year in the field. I'm thrilled to say that Manitoba producers saw new records of farm cash receipts for the second consecutive year. This year the total surpassed 6.2 billion, the highest ever in the province of

Manitoba. I am proud to say that the government's progress in reducing the deficit was helped by success of our farm families.

With lower than expected uptake in the business risk management programs, success in the field equaled more success on our financial books for the province. Throughout the past year there have been numerous announcements tied to agriculture investment and growth that is boosting our economy.

Nearly one year ago, our government proudly announced historic investment by the international pea processing giant, Roquette, who chose to make a \$400-million investment by building a plant in Portage la Prairie, tying into the overall province's protein strategy. Roquette's pea processing plant will position Manitoba as a centre for sustainable protein production.

And just last month our government announced an even larger investment of \$460 million by a potato processing giant, J.R. Simplot Company. By extending their operations here in Manitoba, this investment will secure Manitoba as one of the top producers of potatoes in Canada and, of course, North America. This will be a significant investment; there's 18,000 more acres of potato production that's going to have to be brought into the province of Manitoba, creating those jobs, those economic opportunities and, of course, good-paying jobs for all Manitobans. These two investments will result in nearly 300 full-time positions in the Portage area.

We also witnessed numerous investment-investments in the dairy industry, including the opening of Parmalat, Canada's new innovating milk-processing plant, and MDI's \$55-million milk processing facility in Fort Garry. HyLife Foods is also modernizing and expanding its integrated pork production and processing system with a total investment of \$150 million. This expansion is expected to create more than 200 new jobs for the company, with an anticipated opening date in the very near future.

Manitoba truly is open for business. We believe this is truly a sign of things to come. Our government has made a priority to create more business-friendly environment by reducing red tape, loosen regulatory barriers for that growth. We believe that there are more companies like Roquette and Simplot that are posed to make significant investments into our province.

\* (15:50)

I'd be remiss also if I didn't recognize MacDon Industries, a Manitoba success story who had a very eventful year. MacDon announced expansion into Germany in November. Then, in December, they finalized the sale of its operations to Lanimar corporation, which we expect will continue to see ag manufacturing remaining here in Manitoba.

There was so much activity on trade relations for our ag sector. The new-elected-newly formed CETA agreement came into effect in September, which is paving the way for Manitoba companies to establish further trade relations in Europe. Manitoba is strongly supportive of bilateral trade agreements and market access is critical to making those arrangements happen.

Our government also focused on trade relations much closer to home, advancing the province's priority and renegotiation of NAFTA. I recently represented Manitoba at the state agricultural and rural leaders summit in Kansas City where NAFTA was the leading topic of discussion. At the table with other agriculture ministers and leaders from across North America, we discussed the importance of building upon current trade relations while 'harmonizing' our existing systems and integrated supply chains.

I would like to talk specifically about the livestock sector. With this sector, agriculture in our province is one we hope to see growth in, the vision that Manitoba will lead Canada in a sustainable livestock growth strategy by positioning our livestock sector to take advantage of the growing local and worldwide demand for protein. We will accomplish this by a number of methods. One, modernizing regulations for agriculture growth lands in a way that will support sustainable expansion of the livestock herd in Manitoba with the work of Manitoba Beef and Forage Initiatives, with applied academic research projects that promote sustainable beef and forage production.

Changes to the farm building codes that will reduce unreasonable 'requirement' for barn construction, this has reduced the cost of building new barns without jeopardizing employee or animal safety. We'll eliminate the moratorium on 'hombar' construction by removing the requirement for new barns to have an anaerobic digester or equivalent technology for manure treatment.

Through the Livestock Growth Strategy, we intent to expand substantive hog production by more than 1.6 million to provide sufficient pigs to utilize

our province's processing capacity. This result in significant activity for new barns and in reinvestment in existing barns over the next five years.

We will continue to be supportive of development by industry-led growth strategy.

Though we've much good news to share as Manitoba moves towards a bilateral agreement with the federal government of the next policy framework. I was pleased to sign on to the Canadian agriculture partnership just last summer, which sets out a five-year plan framework that is set to begin programming this April. Manitoba's ag sector can look forward to CAP programming, focusing on the following six areas of investment: science, research and innovation, markets and trade, environmental sustainability and climate change, value-added agriculture and agri-sector processing, of course, public trust and, of course, risk management.

While discussing upcoming opportunities, I want to note improvements to agri-insurance is planned for 2018. These improvements have been implemented to reflect changes in the sector by ensuring better coverage for soybeans, hard red wheat and new, emerging crops. Total agri-insurance coverage for 2018 is expected to be \$2.7 billion on 9.4 million acres of Manitoba, with premium rates down by an average of 7 per cent, as compared to last year.

Our 'goven' is committed to seeing growth and prosperity in the ag sector in Manitoba. Agriculture truly is the driver of our economy and directly contributes to our financial wellbeing. We will continue to move forward with an agenda that further enables investment, encourages trade, ensures our producers remain competitive and seizes opportunities to the environment and the health of our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to a year ahead. I look forward to working as a team to continue addressing the need for fixing our finances of our province, repairing the services that 'Manitobas' depend on, rebuilding our economy. We do this through a team effort, and I know that when our break comes, come the end of March, we're going to have the opportunity to go to Brandon, to the royal winter fair. I know that a number of my colleagues look forward to being there. I know the member from Minto, I think he's been to all of them but one, and he got his daughter to cover for one of those, if I remember right. But, certainly, an opportunity to us to reconnect with our rural friends,

bring our urban-rural together, and when together, we can be accomplishing so much.

We look forward to hearing from more Manitobans as we debate this budget further, but I can assure all members of this House that this budget was done with returning more money to the kitchen tables for Manitobans than it was in the previous government.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the budget is, without question, the worst budget I have ever seen. The recently released report—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —Framework for Economic Alignment and Growth, done by Deloitte, a respected and influential firm, provides—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —a perspective. This is not a report produced by or for the Pallister Conservatives when in opposition. It's not a report produced by or for the Pallister government in its first few months of office. It's not a report produced by or for the Pallister government in its first 22 months of office. It is a report delivered after the Pallister government has taken the reins and been in the driver's seat for two years.

The report says, and I quote: The Province is unable to articulate a forward-thinking vision for the Manitoba economy. I will repeat this. The report, produced by credible people, after talking with numerous stakeholders, says, the current government is unable to articulate a forward looking vision for the Manitoba economy. I will repeat. This is not a report done by a rinky-dink group or somebody with a different political view. The report, by a respected audit consulting and financial firm, says the Pallister government has been, and I quote, "unable to articulate a forward looking vision for the Manitoba economy."

And this is just the start. The report continues: The situation is so bad that industry, academia, and peer governments are uncertain about how best to engage with the government of Manitoba, limiting the scope of true collaboration and policy innovation. Most opposition leaders are able to articulate a forward-looking vision for the provincial or federal government that they want to run when they form

government. Most governments, in their first Throne Speech or in their first 100 days, are able to articulate a forward-looking vision for the provincial or federal economy they are responsible for. Almost every government, even one that stumbles around in its first year, has articulated by their second Throne Speech a forward-thinking vision for the economy that they're responsible for. I do not remember, ever before, a government which, several months past its third Throne Speech, still has not been able to articulate a forward-looking vision for the economy which they are responsible for.

This government is unique. Halfway through their mandate, they still have not clearly articulated a direction for Manitoba's economy. I ask a basic question: Does it make sense for a government with a very large deficit to bring in what the Finance Minister calls the biggest tax break in the history of our province? I say no. The Province should be focused on restoring good financial management along with improving services, including improving the lives of those who are less fortunate and having a clear vision on where the economy should be going. Instead, this is a government focused on having the biggest tax cuts in history.

Let us next ask: How much faster could this government have balanced the budget if it had not led off with big tax cuts? The answer is the budget could've been brought into balance much faster if the government did not solely focus on giving out tax cuts which will primarily benefit those who are well off. In my view, the government should've focused on getting the books in order and improving services in the lives of Manitobans rather than on cutting taxes in this budget.

\* (16:00)

Let us look at the government's new carbon tax. As Loren Remillard, the president and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, has said, the government has created carbon confusion. Loren Remillard and the Winnipeg Chamber suggest an alternative and a better way for a government. Loren Remillard suggested that the government could've used the money from the carbon tax in four ways: transitional support to affected industries like trucking, investing in the clean-tech sector to stimulate the growth of this sector, supporting those on low incomes, support for measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change. And I will add a fifth area where investment is needed: in research and innovation to develop new products and services and

to help build and improve our industries in their future.

The Pallister government has failed to address these five areas with the carbon tax monies. Indeed, the Pallister government has not even provided a clear list of how each dollar raised by the carbon tax will be spent. The proposal of Loren Remillard with the addition of research funding would at least have given some rational structure to the use of the money raised by the carbon tax. It would have given an indication of how the government would approach the economy of the future, supporting existing industries and building the industries for the future.

I will continue on.

What should the government have done if it was really ready to focus on balancing the budget? It should have looked at ways to improve services while saving dollars, like the Nuka health program at the Opaskwayak Cree Nation and many others. But, instead of focusing on success and building on success, the Pallister government is focused on cutting successful programs like the I.V. team at the Health Sciences Centre, the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, the mature women's health centre, the outpatient physiotherapy programs and so much more.

If it were serious in reducing the deficit, the government should focus on growing our economy and getting more jobs for Manitobans. This might include improving our research capacity to develop new products and services so we can grow the green economy in Manitoba and help existing firms. There are win-win solutions, like, for example, reducing nitrous oxide emissions, which make up 15 per cent of our greenhouse gas. Additional research in this area could help farmers and our province. The government could have allocated funds for research related to the reduction of nitrous oxide emissions. Instead, the funds for research with Research Manitoba have been cut by 20 per cent, cutting the very life-sustaining and economy-building effort we need.

In this budget, it's obvious this government would be in big trouble if the federal Liberal government had not increased transfers to Manitoba by \$350 million. By comparison, in 2014-2015, when the Harper government was in Ottawa, the transfers to Manitoba decreased by \$29 million. Members of the Pallister government should think about this before they disparage the Liberal government in Ottawa.

Health care makes up 43 per cent of the total budget. Notably, while the health-care budget is up by \$56 million from last year, Ottawa transferred \$86 million more to Manitoba for health. This means that the Province of Manitoba has cut its provincial contribution to health by \$30 million. In opposition, the Pallister conservatives, day after day, directed petition after petition, question after question about bringing Manitoba's health system into the present century by putting in a badly needed dedicated stroke unit. Every other province in Canada, including Prince Edward Island, has had one for years, and yet here we are, the Pallister government's third budget and still not sign of a dedicated stroke unit. Amazing how off track this government has got.

We all see the need to improve health care, but starting by reducing and eliminating things that are working well is not the way to proceed.

In public meetings, Dougald Lamont and I have heard many suggestions about how to improve health care and save dollars at the same time. In Grandview, we were told that the Parklands was spending \$7.26 million in bringing in locums for nurses instead of building the in-training recruitment and retention programs to have enough nurses living in the communities to fulfill the health needs of people. In the 'horth'—in the North, we heard of ways to reduce the need and the cost to transport people to Winnipeg, improving health and savings costs.

A drug stabilization unit in Winnipeg and one also in Brandon for treating those with addiction to meth and follow-up transition services could improve health and dramatically decrease the social costs of meth addiction. Increasing the numbers of 'publicly' supported peer-support workers and psychologists has been shown to improve mental and brain health and to save health-care dollars. Better integration of nurse practitioners into our health-care system can improve health and save health-care dollars. Better support for families to have our—fewer children taken into care to—could improve our society and reduce many societal problems over time, as well as reducing government costs. But there isn't sufficient action here to have any confidence that the government can deliver.

Indeed, the government is not listening and not using common sense. Remarkably, in many rural communities, the government is getting rid of the ability of local pharmacists to support people in the personal-care homes in its community.

The government is also planning to get rid of the Grandview ambulance centre, which is well integrated into the community health care and offers excellent service. This is a mistake.

The government has also so organized affairs in Manitoba that we're losing medical labs in many doctors' offices, another mistake. And on and on and on.

This budget is a problem. It's geared to take money from those who are less well off and to give more money to those who are rich, increasing inequality and poverty in our province. Hundreds of millions of dollars in new money from the federal government should have been invested in health care, social services and education. It's all going to tax cuts.

The basic personal exemption has been touted to provide income tax relief for low-income Manitobans but doesn't do this effectively because it benefits high-income earners much more than anyone else. When combined with indexation of tax brackets, the savings to those who earn less than \$30,000 a year are small, while the savings to those earning in higher brackets are much larger.

Meanwhile, the cost of basic expenses, including electricity costs, the costs of gas for your car, the cost of heating your home, the cost of drugs and many other costs are going up. Those on low incomes have fewer options to avoid these costs. This budget will negatively impact those on low incomes while enabling those with high incomes to be comfortable. Budgeting should focus on the needs of all and particularly those on low incomes and those who are disadvantaged.

The Pallister government's 'management' of Manitoba Hydro also means that hydro rate increases are essentially hidden tax. The complete lack of any mention of Manitoba Hydro in the budget speech shows that the Pallister government is ashamed rather than proud of its stewardship of Manitoba Hydro. Indeed, Pallister and his government are taking \$380 million from Manitoba Hydro this year and every year to make the Province's books look better.

While the budget documents claim—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. I just want to—order.

I just want to remind the member that when you refer to the government, refer to the Pallister



government, not to the individual's name, as the member.

Okay, the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

**Mr. Gerrard:** While the budget documents claim that slow growth is the new normal, the reality is that two years into their mandate the PCs have no plan. Governments by their actions can influence the economy of their jurisdiction. This includes Manitoba. Having a government accepting low growth shows this is a government without a vision to improve. The government's stated goal some years ago of aiming higher seems to have been replaced by a vision to aim lower.

In addition, the Pallister government is substantially cutting funding and services for Manitoba's francophone community. And why is there no specific funding listed for the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Experimental Lakes Area in this budget? Is this Harper No. 2 in cutting ELA and science?

It is sad to learn of the Pallister government's disregard for human rights, cutting the budget of Manitoba Human Rights Commission by 12 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals will not support this budget.

I move, seconded by the MLA for Kewatinook,

*THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause (h) the following clauses:*

failing to articulate a forward-looking vision or have an adequate plan for job creation and growth for the Manitoba economy; and

failing to bring in a budget which will decrease inequality in Manitoba by not increasing EIA payments and instead increasing costs for those on low incomes by imposing higher taxes, higher transit costs and higher electricity costs without any offsets to help those on low incomes; and

- (k) bringing in a carbon tax without providing transitional support for trucking or related industries nor a logical, clear and precise explanation of where the money raised will be spent, causing carbon confusion and no clear signals regarding the future of related jobs and opportunities in building a green economy; and

\* (16:10)

- (l) failing to show clear plans to mitigate the problems associated with climate change, including increased floods, droughts and forest fires; and
- (m) failing to provide leadership in moving to the development and manufacturing in Manitoba of electric vehicles, including cars, buses, trucks and tractors; and
- (n) failing to address the win-win of reducing nitrous oxide from agricultural processes; and
- (o) failing to make progress on eco-certification for Lake Winnipegosis; and
- (p) failing to even mention Manitoba Hydro in the budget speech and neglecting to take measures to reduce the expected dramatic increase in hydro rates; and
- (q) failing to act to improve the health of Manitobans by taking such measures as restoring the exceptional Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, restoring lactation services and the I.V. team at the Health Sciences Centre, supporting the ability of doctors' offices to have medical laboratories, investing in emergency management measures and supporting rural emergency medical services and local health teams including rural pharmacists and assuring there are sufficient numbers of paramedics, particularly advanced care paramedics, in rural Manitoba; and
- (r) continuing to clawback tens of millions of dollars from Children's Special Allowances to the detriment of children and families in Manitoba; and
- (s) failing to develop a duty-to-consult framework for indigenous communities; and
- (t) failing to invest in the city of Winnipeg and other municipalities by cutting funding; and
- (u) failing to invest in CFS transformation by cutting funding to strategic initiatives and program support; and
- (v) failing to address the meth crisis in Manitoba by failing to put in place a drug stabilization unit and traditional–transitional support to help meth addicts to address their situation; and

- (w) failing to provide clear funding for the International Institute for Sustainable Development; and
- (x) failing to invest in the areas of immigration, status of women or francophone affairs and French education by cutting support; and
- (y) failing to invest in the advancement of human rights by cutting funding to the Human Rights Commission; and
- (z) failing to invest carbon tax or federal funding in environmental measures, reduce emissions by cutting funding to the clear environment commission, water stewardship and environmental stewardship; and
- (aa) failing to support post-secondary education institutions, forcing universities and colleges to cut services to students or programs; and
- (bb) reducing funding for research and innovation by reducing the budget for Research Manitoba; and
- (cc) failing to prioritize east-side road construction and breaking promises with respect to the funding of infrastructure in Manitoba.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I guess, when the member from River Heights actually read his amendment-subamendment, he indicated that there was an issue of reading it directly.

So I just wanted to make sure that—if it's—been—okayed by the House to actually have it recorded as written, as printed.

Is there leave to consider it as printed? *[Agreed]*

*THAT the amendment be amended by adding after clause (h) the following clauses:*

- i) failing to articulate a forward looking vision or have an adequate plan for job creation and growth for the Manitoba economy; and*
- j) failing to bring in a budget which will decrease inequality in Manitoba by not increasing EIA payments and instead increasing costs for those on low incomes by imposing higher taxes, higher transit costs and higher electricity costs without any offsets to help those on low incomes; and*
- k) bringing in a carbon tax without providing transitional support for trucking or related industries nor a logical, clear and precise explanation of where the money raised will be spent causing carbon confusion and no clear signals regarding the future of related jobs and opportunities in building a green economy; and*
- l) failing to show clear plans to mitigate the problems associated with climate change including increased floods, droughts and forest fires; and*
- m) failing to provide leadership in moving to the development and manufacturing in Manitoba of electric vehicles including cars, buses, trucks and tractors; and*
- n) failing to address the win-win of reducing Nitrous Oxide from Agricultural processes; and*
- o) failing to make progress on eco certification for Lake Winnipegosis; and*
- p) failing to even mention Manitoba Hydro in the budget speech and neglecting to take measures to reduce the expected dramatic increase in hydro rates; and*
- q) failing to act to improve the health of Manitobans by taking such measures as: restoring the exceptional Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, restoring lactation services and the IV team at the Health Sciences Centre, supporting the ability of doctors' offices to have medical laboratories, investing in emergency management measures and supporting rural emergency medical services and local health teams including rural pharmacists and assuring there are sufficient numbers of paramedics, particularly advanced care paramedics in rural Manitoba; and*
- r) continuing to claw back tens of millions of dollars from children's special allowances to the detriment of children and families in Manitoba; and*
- s) failing to develop a duty to consult framework for Indigenous communities; and*
- t) failing to invest in the City of Winnipeg and other municipalities by cutting funding; and*
- u) failing to invest in CFS transformation by cutting funding to strategic initiatives and program support; and*
- v) failing to address the meth crisis in Manitoba by failing to put in place a drug stabilization unit and transitional support to help meth addicts to address their situation; and*

- w) *failing to provide clear funding for the International Institute for Sustainable Development; and*
- x) *failing to invest in the areas of Immigration, Status of Women or Francophone Affairs and French education by cutting support; and*
- y) *failing to invest in the advancement of human rights by cutting funding to the Human Rights Commission; and*
- z) *failing to invest Carbon Tax or Federal Funding in environmental measures to reduce emission by cutting funding to the Clean Environment Commission, Water Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship; and*
- aa) *failing to support post-secondary education institutions forcing universities and colleges to cut services to students or programs; and*
- bb) *reducing funding for research and innovation by reducing the budget for Research Manitoba; and*
- cc) *failing to prioritize the East Side Road construction and breaking promises with respect to the funding of infrastructure in Manitoba.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay.

It has been moved by the member of River Heights, seconded by the member of Kewatinook,

*THAT the amendment be amended by—*

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I—is it the will to dispense? *[Agreed]*

Sub-amendment is now recorded—in order.

The debate is now open.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

**Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond):** Manitobans understand the benefits of hard work. They also understand the concept of living within their means. Our government was given a mandate to return to these tried, tested and true measures, and this budget reflects the efforts made by all the stakeholders and our departments.

When households are faced with financial stressors, it can have an effect on all areas of their life, whether it be food affordability or bill payments, or even health care. It is no different with governments, Madam Speaker. We do not have an endless supply of funds to address every single

pressure and ask. So we need to prioritize and practise restraint on spending to make the funds go further and last longer. Each day I have the honour of working alongside our Health Minister, Kelvin Goertzen, as the legislative assistant—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Just a reminder to all members that, when referring to other members in the House, it is by their ministerial titles or by their constituency names.

**Mrs. Guillemard:** My apologies—the MLA for Steinbach—as a legislative assistant to this portfolio, and I am beyond impressed with his compassion, his wisdom and his patience while handling a challenging portfolio. He is a great role model and a respected colleague.

Our government made the decision to move towards responsible governance, and the benefits to all Manitobans now and into the future will be a lasting gift. When governments plan for sustainability, our citizens experience stability and can plan for a successful future. Good management of taxpayer dollars leads to stability, and with that stability comes security in knowing what to expect year over year.

When we reach a stage where uncertainty can evolve into trust, opportunities will be abundant for all Manitobans. Madam Speaker, this is what our budget has done for Manitobans. We are replacing the years of NDP confusion, mismanaged funds and lack of consultation—which only broke trust with those who were represented—with a new hope through promises kept and willingness to listen and work collaboratively.

One such example of consultation and collaboration ties directly into the recent announcement of a new high school in south Winnipeg. Madam Speaker, I myself have fond memories working on parent councils. I even was part of a group that was a high school advocacy group where we recognized the need over 12 years ago for a new high school in the south end of Winnipeg.

Their efforts of this high school advocacy group had begun eight years prior to my involvement when they saw the growing population in the other high schools as well as the projected numbers that were to come with new developments. And it was interesting, Madam Speaker, I looked through a number of the notes for my initiatives—my time in

parent councils, and I found a meeting where we had at the Pembina Trails School Division one evening on December 11th, 2007. That was over 11 years ago. Present at that meeting was the former minister of Education, and we were able to ask questions about the processes of new schools and how it's chosen where they will be located and who gets the allocated funds and how they decide these details.

One of the questions from the minutes of this meeting, Madam Speaker, was what would constitute a need for a new high school. We were parents volunteering our time advocating for what we knew was necessary and needed in the area. And the answer—or, a portion of the answer from the minister at the time, who was Peter Bjornson, mentioned that the—new schools cannot be made with projected numbers. They cannot be built in anticipation but, rather, the policy was to build them just in time. It is a judgment call, not a science, is what he answered. They have to set priorities to use the resources that they have.

Madam Speaker, I think that I can speak on behalf of many families in the south end of Winnipeg when I say this new high school is long overdue. It is beyond just in time, and it will be a welcome addition to the community. Clearly, our government's judgment reflects the need in this case.

It is also interesting to note the former minister of Education's use of the phrase that government has to set priorities and use the resources we have. This was a comment well before the previous government decided to increase the PST on Manitobans rather than use the resources that they have,

\* (16:20)

So it reveals at one time the concept of living within your means was well known to the members of the opposition. Clearly, they didn't follow it.

I had a visit by a constituent recently, Madam Speaker, just last weekend, and she's a grade 11 student in one of our Winnipeg schools. She had a few questions about our deficit and the deficit spending and what does that mean in terms of programming and some of the decisions that we had to make.

So we had a great discussion on the difference between deficit spending and how that's different than what your debt load is, and as long as you are deficit spending you are spending more than what you are bringing in. That is not a sustainable budget to continue, and we are well on our way to a

balanced budget, and that will free us up to address our debts, and once you have addressed your debt load and once you have eliminated your deficit you absolutely are free to invest in the very programs that we hold dear here in Manitoba, and until then it is all of our collective responsibility to fix those finances that we promised Manitobans and we are doing that.

Madam Speaker, this young lady who came to visit me, she mentioned that she is in macro-economics and she's in the advanced placement program. What she gave me in terms of feedback as we discussed these finances has me convinced our future is in great hands. She has a full understanding, as do her classmates in this class, of the difficulties we are facing and the mess that we were left with when we came into government. She is fully supportive of the measures we have made and actually quite impressed with how much progress we have made in cleaning up the financial mess.

She also asked me about respectful workplace, Madam Speaker. She mentioned to me that there are rules within her high school that you are not to demean others. You are not to touch them inappropriately or say derogatory comments, regardless of gender, and she made mention that she had visited once or twice the Legislative Assembly and she had actually compared it to a previous visit years ago with the former government here.

She noticed that it was a difference in decorum, Madam Speaker. She was encouraged to see that some of the lessons they are learning within the school halls are now being applied within our Chamber of that respect and learning to change our behaviours so that we all can safely work together.

Madam Speaker, again, I'm going to emphasize our future is in great hands with the youth of today. They have wonderful ideas. They have found their voice and it's up to us to listen to them. They are going to be instrumental in the success of this province.

Any success in government will boil down to honesty and integrity. We have not hidden the mess that we have been handed, neither have we backed down from the steep chore of cleaning it up.

Madam Speaker, this is integrity. When you find yourself in a mess that you did not create but you will help clean it up for the benefit of others.

My hope is that we do not ever find ourselves faced with such a problem in the future. With proper planning and responsible governance our govern-

ment can only—or cannot only get out of this financial hole that has been dug, but we can stay out of it in future.

I'm very proud of my team and grateful for the steady leadership that has brought us to this stage along the path to success. Through rough waters we have continued to steer towards the shore and it is in sight now.

Manitobans deserve a break, Madam Speaker, and that is exactly what this budget offers.

There will be more money left in the hands of our citizens who are best suited to make decisions about their own priorities, and less will be taken from their hard-earned paycheques.

Everyone is tired of the constant spin and fear mongering perpetuated by those who don't want to be accountable for past mistakes.

The results of our government's hard work is beginning to show and the benefits to Manitobans will be felt for years to come.

No government wants to be the hard decision makers, yet everybody benefits from responsible governance. Irresponsible governance by previous NDP government left Manitobans with very little wiggle room for support and vital programs. Everyone is tired of not knowing what to expect year over year and, Madam Speaker, our budget, the 2018 budget, is going to give that reassurance that we can return to stability, that we can feel secure and that there will be far more opportunities for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** It's my pleasure to rise to speak to the budget and, of course, the very important amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. It is—there's certainly, as always with this government, lots to talk about, and I certainly look forward to the opportunity to spend some time, put some words on the record on behalf of my constituents and do my best to represent the viewpoints that I'm hearing from them and from so many other Manitobans.

But, before I address the budget, Madam Speaker, I did want to take just a brief moment to acknowledge the member for St. Boniface, who—the former member for St. Boniface, Greg Selinger, who recently left this place, and I had no opportunity in a formal way to address his departure and I thought it appropriate to do so now.

It was certainly interesting times here in Manitoba when I was able to serve with the former premier, and he was certainly somebody that I, when I got to know him, certainly saw that he was fully dedicated to that job of serving Manitobans, that he always felt that he was putting their best interests forward and did so in a way that certainly showed that he was willing to do whatever it took to serve Manitobans. And he didn't always get it right, Madam Speaker, but he certainly put in that effort in an honest—what he believed an honest way, and I think Manitobans certainly see that truth and see that and respect that about him.

Madam Speaker, I did want to, as I said, start my words this afternoon with regards to the budget, coming from a place of the average Manitoban, the average resident of Concordia, and I've had a chance to speak with many residents over the past number of months, you know, and a few since the budget has been tabled and I've heard from a few just this morning, and hearing their particular viewpoints.

But what I'm hearing from them is a bit of confusion, first of all, sort of trying to understand how at the same time that the federal government is giving the provincial government this massive windfall in terms of transfer payments, additional health-care dollars, when they're giving the—or, they're given the opportunity, I guess, to implement a carbon tax here in this province, that at the same time as all of these taxes are going up on the average individual in Manitoba and all this additional revenue is coming in, that there are—continue to be cuts to the health care and education and infrastructure that they count on, and that's their biggest concern. And I'm having a hard time squaring that circle for them as well, I have to admit, because to my mind when there are opportunities that this provincial government has been given, when there are opportunities to protect those front-line services—and remember, this was a government that ran very clearly on protecting front-line services and protecting the workers who provide them—they are having—constituents are having a hard time understanding why that promise is being broken and why this government isn't acknowledging the real hurt that's being felt by the average Manitoban.

So, again, I'll start from my own constituency, as I always do, talk about Concordia Hospital. Concordia Hospital is an absolute gem for our community. It's a necessary service that's provided, and it's a necessary part of the health-care services

that are provided for all of northeast Winnipeg as well as the entire Eastman part of our province.

\* (16:30)

And, you know, and just this last week we had more confusion about the Concordia Hospital emergency room. We were on track—the government was pushing through an agenda to close that emergency room in spring. Folks were gearing up for that change, that reality. And now—we've heard now, maybe it won't be the spring. Maybe it'll be fall, maybe it'll be next year, maybe it'll be sometime in the future. And that comes directly from the work of the wait times task force, which said, very clearly, that the changes that have already taken place are untenable—that they aren't sustainable. And the concern that the wait times task force had on the capacity at other hospitals, the lack of investment in other hospitals and emergency rooms and just the shock to the system that's being felt right now.

And, I mean, I can talk about that on a personal level. I can certainly talk about how my family has tried to navigate the changes to the health-care system when we had an issue with my very young son. My—and, you know, and—being the MLA for Concordia, being the—a member of this Chamber, I would argue I'm probably the—one of the best, capable people in Manitoba to navigate these changes or to understand them or to have some concept of them. But we had no idea where to go when we needed to access health-care services. We picked up the phone and called Health Links. Health Links, which is a great service, they were telling us different information than we ended up getting from the clinic that we went to.

So it—there was a bunch of confusion even within the system, but, certainly, on our part. And, again, someone with all the resources, all the ability to travel wherever it takes in the city—at one point we were being directed to Victoria. I was started driving down to Victoria hospital, which I can say is quite a ways away from my house, but I was told that's the—that's where the urgent care centre is, so go to Victoria hospital.

My point is, Madam Speaker, is that there are so many—there's so much confusion, there are so many cuts that are happening, and at a time when Manitobans are saying, stop—when they're saying take another look—when they're saying protect those services like you said you would—this government continues to plough ahead with this austerity agenda and an agenda of cutting across the board and hurting

the average Manitoban. And that's an absolute shame, I would say.

So I hope that this government will reconsider. I hope that they will take some time. There is a capital budget which was underspent by \$175 million, Madam Speaker. There are capital projects in the health-care system that are absolutely necessary and need to be done now, and I hope that this government would see fit to start spending that money in a way that Manitobans are pleading for them to do.

I do want to talk, though, Madam Speaker, this afternoon with regards to education in this province, and I see how quickly my time goes when only given 20 minutes. So I do want to spend some time talking about education, because—as I am the education critic, I've had numerous opportunities now to reach out to stakeholders, to speak with a number of organizations that represent teachers and parents and administrators, and I've also had the opportunity to talk to parents and teachers themselves in the classroom and in the schools.

It was just I Love To Read month—a great opportunity. I think everyone in this Chamber loves that opportunity to go out, speak to children, read to them, to encourage them to love to learn and love to read. And I've never had this experience in all the time that I've been elected, but I had teachers grabbing me as I was running down—or walking down the hallway—coming out of their classrooms, literally grabbing me to give me an earful about their concerns about this budget.

And, you know, sometimes we think, you know, that these budgets are only consumed by, you know, policy wonks or members of this Chamber, but teachers certainly understood the impact of this—these cuts. They understood what this is going to mean for them in the classroom. They are—they've already seen their class sizes increase. They've already seen their resources—EAs and other resources taken away from them. They've already seen some of their colleagues lose their jobs. So they understand what the implications are, and they're trying to just educate our kids. They're trying to give the best education possible to our kids. And, as a parent, I can tell you that's the No. 1 priority for so many people here in this province and—you know—when we see.

So now, I—this was the budget that just—the education funding announcement that came out in January—or, in February. I was able to go and speak to them about that, talk to them about the restraints

and the lack of a commitment by this government to even keep up with inflation, let alone the growing province and the growing enrolment that we see in our schools. And now I have to talk to them about the capital.

And so, you know, the day before the budget, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) came out and said, hey, we're going to build five new schools. I think everybody in Manitoba, you know, breathed a sigh of relief that finally schools were being built in this province, but the problem here is, Madam Speaker, these were schools that we could have been moving on, we could have been building, we could have been moving at—forward on. These are schools needed by the communities; these are schools that communities have done a lot of work to plan, to organize, to understand the need for them. And it was this government that said no, no, no, wait, wait, wait, wait, stop the presses. We're not going forward on your new schools. In fact, we're going to go and talk to our consultants first and say we want a P3. How can you make a P3 work for building schools? It's been done in other provinces; it hasn't worked in other provinces. But here, please, help it work here. Give us some kind of logic in backing this. And of course, the consultants went back and I'm sure they worked as hard as they could to fix the numbers to get them just to work exactly right, but at the end of the day, no, it wasn't the P3 model that this government went ahead with, it was regular—the regular model. The good old-fashioned model where the government sees a need, understands that there is a need in the community and builds that school through the best practices that they can. That model.

You know, now so they're saying, well, we're going to do five at once. I think that's a great idea. I think this is something that could have been moved on day one of this government. They could have picked up the baton from the previous government, who already had plans for Waterford Green, who already had plans for a school in Brandon, who was moving down the line on those schools and it was this government that halted them, that sat on their hands for three years.

So we're behind three years right now, and I'm worried, Madam Speaker, that we'll continue to be further behind. And we will be—continue to be further behind when it comes to funding of education. As I said, the rate of inflation and the rate of enrolment in our schools dictates that this government's just not doing enough. It's a de facto cut to school divisions and school divisions all across

this province are having to make difficult decisions. They're coming to us and they're saying, will this government—can you make this government listen? Can you get them to understand just how grave it is for our school divisions when we're constrained on what we can tax, when we're constrained on what we can spend and we're not given the proper resources? And so they're cutting all around the edges, all around the periphery when it comes to our education.

So, you know, Madam Speaker, it is a budget that doesn't speak to Manitobans. I've never had one person come to me and say, you know what I want is I want less spending on our schools, I want less spending on our hospitals and in our health-care system. Not one person came forward and would say that to me, and I would imagine it's probably—there's probably not one member opposite that would have heard that either.

And the other group of Manitobans that have come very clearly to me, and I know have come very clearly in this Chamber and have come clearly to the steps of this Legislature, are university students, Madam Speaker, and university students have been downloaded on. They came to us, they were concerned about Bill 31, about the impacts of rising tuition, and now we see how this is going to be played out, because in yesterday's budget what we now discovered is that post-secondary education institutions, not only did they get a freeze last budget, they're now getting a cut in their budget this year, and we know that those universities are, again, doing their absolute best to provide an education for the workers of tomorrow in this province, and they're under the same financial constraints as all of us.

And so, when their funding doesn't match the level of inflation, it doesn't meet their costs, they're going to look absolutely anywhere they can to raise the funds necessary to provide that education, and so there's no question now in my mind that that 5 per cent that they are allowed to raise tuition will be something that they most likely would do and that doesn't include the fees that students pay that they will then have to pay in addition. So there's more and more pressures on university students. An extra 5 per cent will make tuition \$1,000 more expensive by 2022, and that's just prohibitive for so many students.

\* (16:40)

We also know that the bursary program, which was much touted by this government, first of all,

didn't meet its private fundraising targets and is in jeopardy because of that. But beyond that, then, the funding for that program has been decreased going forward. So students are getting hit from every single direction. Not only is there—are their institutions getting less funding, they're paying higher tuition and they're paying more in fees, and their bursary program is being cut. It's coming at them from all directions, Madam Speaker, when all they want to do is get the best education they possibly can, contribute here in Manitoba and stay in Manitoba, and I'm concerned that that won't happen.

Well, Madam Speaker, I do see my time is getting shorter, so I will have to skip—jump and skip a little bit. But I will do that just to wrap things up. I did want to speak a little bit about infrastructure, because it is a topic that is very much on the minds of Manitobans.

There's—there was a very successful infrastructure plan that was put forward by the previous government, an infrastructure plan that started to make a dent in the massive infrastructure deficit of our highways and our roads and our bridges here in this province. That's been completely abandoned now by this government.

And this government refuses to even meet its own obligations and its own commitments, let alone to be forward-thinking and seeing how infrastructure can be a part of a growing province and can be an economic driver, especially at a time, I have to say, I'm quite shocked that members opposite seem to just be skipping right by the fact that our unemployment rate is on the rise and that we're less competitive when it comes to other provinces. It's quite shocking to me that nobody's standing up and saying: well, that's a bit of a concern and, boy, we should maybe come up with a good jobs plan and a good education plan and a good training plan, going forward, to make sure that Manitobans are getting the right jobs that fit the market that's coming our way, because this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to changes that are coming our way.

So, Madam Speaker, as I said, my time is growing very short, so I think I'll try to wrap things up here. This is a budget that represents broken promises by this government, once again, and to a level, I think, that, perhaps even shocked, you know, members opposite, but certainly people in the public because that's definitely what I'm hearing about people's priorities in this province. Very clear: it's health, it's education, it's infrastructure. And this

government is failing in absolutely every single one of those categories.

And they're failing at a time when equalization payments are up, when health-care transfers are higher than the rate that they're raising their own spending on health care—so they're just pocketing that back into general revenue—and at a time when the carbon tax represents an actual opportunity to not only—you know, I mean, I applaud this government in understanding that it is a revenue-neutral tax; they are supposed to spend this money, but they're supposed to spend it on something that actually reduces the carbon footprint of the province. And they continue to say that they have a plan or there is going to be a green plan or—but there is no plan. There is no plan. There's absolutely no plan. And, if there is a plan, they're certainly not using the money that they're generating from the tax to implement that plan. So, if the plan exists, it has nothing to do with the money that's being gathered from the carbon tax.

So what's the point of the carbon tax? Well, this government seems to believe that giving a flat tax break to all Manitobans, including our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and members opposite and myself, I guess—I include myself on that list. I get a big tax break from this government's raising of the basic personal—*[interjection]*—the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) rightly identifies it's really not that big, but, hey, I'll take that money. But, you know what, if I had the choice, I think that money would go—would be better served going to those Manitobans who can least afford to deal with the changes coming because of climate change, who can least afford to adapt to those changes and can least afford to make ends meet.

So, when you raise transit fares, when you cut funding for transit and then you take that money and you give it back to those people who least need it, you're not accomplishing what you're supposed to be accomplishing with the carbon tax. And that doesn't even speak to the cannabis opportunity where it comes—when it comes to revenue and how to spend that money smartly, in a way that invests in our province and makes things better.

So I'll wrap things up there, Madam Speaker, simply to say that this is a budget of broken promises. It is so regressive. It fails to look forward, look—it fails to look forward at the future of this province. And really all it does is, you know, there's no magic formula here that the Conservatives have figured out. They're getting more revenue and they're



giving it away. They're giving it away to the people who least need it, but they're not using it in a way that improves this province. And so I will not be voting for this budget.

**Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk):** Before I start, it is important to acknowledge we are on Treaty 1 territory and the traditional homeland of the Metis nation.

Madam Speaker, the Legislature was alive with a positive buzz on Monday. The budget is generating a gate—a great deal of positive excitement amongst all Manitobans. Our 'finsance' minister states: we are keeping our promises, and that is what we are delivering in this budget.

I would like to thank the Finance Minister for his past and his continued hard work and dedication to fixing our finances, restoring the services and rebuilding the economy for the benefit of all Manitobans. I know this job must be difficult at times, given our starting point. And we all appreciate the commitment of our minister and the results produced to date. All Manitobans can appreciate and embrace the tremendous amount of work that occurs through the Estimates process leading up to budget day. Finding the right balance after years of misspending and credit rating downgrades is a difficult task.

Manitobans are pleased to see our government is on a refreshing new course after having to endure years of government that failed to meet the needs of Manitobans. Correcting the course is not an easy task. I am proud to see that this government has been able to bend the curve in just two short years. Clearly, we are on the way to being the most improved province in Canada.

My constituents are very pleased to see a budget which stays the course, decreases the deficit, helps strengthen our economy and lowers basic personal income taxes. All of our ministers' commitments to a value-for-money approach within all departments will help ensure that Manitobans receive the best value for their hard-earned tax dollars while leaving more of their hard-earned dollars in their pockets and on their kitchen tables.

Madam Speaker, the minister has stated we need to repair our services and we need to rebuild our economy. We have had numerous town hall meetings with our constituents leading up to the drafting and preparation of this budget. The message from all Manitobans was strong and clear. They are

happy to see we are following through on our commitment to get our expenditures under control. They asked us to ensure that they are getting value for tax dollars being spent. They continue to ask us to pay down the debt to help lower our financing costs.

They all realized that, as with their own family expenditures, a government cannot continue to spend beyond their resources and expect the finances to fix themselves. Some asked for a quick correction, others for a slower approach. And, in the end, all agreed that a steady, controlled approach would serve the best interests of all Manitobans. Madam Speaker, no one—and I repeat, no one—at the town hall meetings in my area thought it was possible nor a good idea to try to borrow our way out of debt that was the previous government's plan.

Most believe that for them maximizing their available disposable income was a top priority. Having a higher income, if the costs of everything goes up, does not help anyone. It is only when more money is left in the hands of Manitobans that they are able to plan for future expenditures and savings. The more Manitobans spend in Manitoba, the higher our GDP and the greater our ability to provide goods and services. The old saying, build it and they will come, is also true of our provincial economy.

\* (16:50)

Madam Speaker, residents in my area applauded our government's commitment to restructuring of health care. Most realized that health-care costs generally outpace normal inflation, and they have asked us to put more pressure on our federal partner to live up to their commitment to pay their share and stop asking Manitobans to continue to pick up the lion's share of health-care expenditures.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans deserve stability of their finances, security of their services and opportunity to having a restored, robust economy. Under the NDP financial plan, the average Manitoban had very little, if any, money left after meeting all their monthly expenses. On top of this, all Manitobans are worried as they face many financial threats: the threat of rising hydro rates through the NDP mismanagement; the threat of rising interest 'raitchs'—rates, which we all know is inevitable; increasing interest rates will place an extra financial burden on everyone who needs to make interest payments; the threat of all of the levels of government increasing their taxes. The current excess spending by our current federal government

will need to be paid at some point leaving Canadian taxpayers to pay the bill.

As a provincial government, we are taking less from Manitobans and giving back more. Madam Speaker, constituents in my area are very pleased with the plan to increase Manitoba's basic personal tax exemptions to what will be above the median for all Canadian provinces.

We are currently last compared to all provinces, and, with these changes, we will move to being a province with one of the highest basic personal tax exemptions. Increasing the basic personal exemption will see approximately 30,000 of Manitoban's low-income earners, taken off the tax rolls. Increasing the basic exemption will mean a lot for all Manitobans. For the average Manitoban working 2,000 hours a year, the increase to the basic tax exemption over the next two years would be roughly equivalent to \$1 per hour increase in tax-free income.

This means more disposable income available for Manitobans on a monthly, daily and yearly basis—money they need daily, money they can spend as they decide instead of having to give it to a misspending government as in the past. This will make our province much more competitive. For students, they will have an additional \$2,020 available in two years, while we still have some of the lowest tuition rates in Canada. Madam Speaker, Manitoba will go from one of the highest taxed provinces to one of the most improved provinces in Canada. Our low-income earners should be extremely pleased with this budget. Their benefit will be roughly four times that of our high-income earners.

Small business is the backbone of our economy and jobs, improving the ability of those who do more—most to support our economy by increasing the starting point for taxes from \$450,000 to \$500,000 is greatly appreciated by all Manitoban small-business owners. It will provide our small businesses with extra money and help move our businesses in line with other provinces, and the extra money is needed for hiring more employees, for expanding their businesses and making much-needed improvements such as buying new equipment and possibly investing in new ventures.

And, Madam Speaker, I do hope this will also encourage those who are sitting on the fence when it comes to starting a new business to realize this is a

government who appreciates the risks they take. And small businesses are the heart of our economy. Owners work tirelessly to make ends meet, and, at the end of the day, they are the last to be paid after employees, after suppliers, bankers and taxes are paid. This shows businesses that Manitoba is competitive.

With announcements of almost a billion dollars in private industry investment in our agricultural food processing industry, this is a very strong signal from private investors that they believe in our new government and its commitment to restoring the economy. Combined, these two projects will bring hundreds of new jobs to Manitoba. This does not include the stimulus effect to our local farmer. These are all very positive and progressive announcements that stem from business's belief that our government is following the right course, a course all Manitobans should embrace.

Madam Speaker, it is true we are concerned over value for money just like every taxpaying Manitoban we represent. That is why we are looking for value in every dollar our government allocates. The facts are, we are concerned about our most vulnerable: the sick, the injured, our children, our seniors and our families. We are concerned today and for their future. The facts are, we have increased our budget to CFS by over 10 per cent. We have increased our education expenditures by over 10 per cent. We have increased our health-care expenditures by over 10 per cent.

Budget 2018 puts Manitoba's economy on the road to recovery and provides a solid plan for making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada. We are investing in priorities all Manitobans deserve. If members opposite speak against this budget, they are essentially saying that Manitobans do not deserve a break, that Manitobans do not deserve value for their tax dollars. They are saying that Manitobans should continue to pay the highest taxes while accepting being one of the worst performing provinces when it comes to health care, education, child and family service—and their legacy list goes on.

Madam Speaker, we stand united to keep our promises to Manitobans, and we are getting results. We are on our way to being the most improved province in Canada.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** So much to criticize, so little time.

I will speak to this budget—it appears—briefly today before our time expires, and then resume my comments tomorrow.

Overall, I think this budget is trying to appeal to some of the worst attributes that we have. This is a budget that is hoping that greed works, that dangling a bit of money in front of people will get them to forget the importance of building our society and improving our future and investing in the services that all of us depend upon. I really feel bad for someone who would look with any degree of excitement at the tax cuts that this government is proposing while, at the same time, they are whacking service after service after service that all of us and all of our families depend upon.

If you are a parent and you have children in the K-to-12 education system, you are going to have a more stressed education system than you have had previously because of this government's approach to funding education. There are going to be fewer educational assistants available to help students with special needs. There are going to be fewer facilities and opportunities available for the students that are there already. There are going to be more students in each classroom, working already overextended teachers even further.

And all of this could very easily be prevented if this government actually believed in governing. This Conservative government, quite simply, does not actually believe that government should be providing services to the public. They are systematically

chewing away at the vitality and the necessity of public services, lining things up for additional privatization. This follows a pattern of conservative governments at the national, local, provincial levels—not just in Canada, but around the world. And it will be to the detriment of our society and our kids' future should these cuts and this attitude and these policies continue beyond this government's one term that they have at the moment.

The exact same processes can be seen taking its toll on our health-care system. And I want to thank our Education critic and our Health critic for the yeoman's work that they are doing exposing the incredible cuts that this government is bringing down, impacting people. If you are someone who has an aging parent and you need to try and find them a personal-care home in Manitoba, good luck. This government's approach to helping families help themselves look after our loved ones is just absolutely polar opposite of what is actually required. If you are hoping that you might be able to help someone in your family or in your community stay out of the hospital, stay out of the health-care system, have access to some prevention programs—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 17 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

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