

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Man.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	Ind.
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen, Hon.	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
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
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 29, 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, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Third Report

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- October 24, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.
- October 25, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 16)** – *The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act / Loi sur la mise en œuvre du Plan vert et climatique*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the October 24, 2018 meeting:

- Mr. ALLUM

- Mr. ALTEMEYER
- Mr. BINDLE
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mrs. GUILLEMARD (Chairperson)
- Mr. ISLEIFSON
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN
- Hon. Ms. SQUIRES
- Mr. WOWCHUK
- Mr. YAKIMOSKI

Your Committee elected Mr. ISLEIFSON as the Vice-Chairperson at the October 24, 2018 meeting.

Committee Membership for the October 25, 2018 meeting:

- Mr. ALTEMEYER
- Mr. BINDLE
- Mrs. GUILLEMARD (Chairperson)
- Mr. LAMONT
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Mr. MARCELINO
- Mr. NESBITT
- Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN
- Hon. Ms. SQUIRES
- Mr. WOWCHUK
- Mr. YAKIMOSKI

Your Committee elected Mr. NESBITT as the Vice-Chairperson at the October 24, 2018 meeting.

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the October 24, 2018 meeting:

- Mr. KINEW

Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the October 25, 2018 meeting:

- Mr. KINEW
- Hon. Mr. FLETCHER
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following 38 presentations on **Bill (No. 16)** – *The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act / Loi sur la mise en œuvre du Plan vert et climatique*:*

October 24, 2018 meeting

Trent Hreno, Ducks Unlimited Canada
 Dan McInnis, Sustainable Building Manitoba Inc.
 Gaile Whelan-Enns, Manitoba Wildlands
 Ross Redman, Private Citizen
 Robert Elms, Manitoba Electric Vehicle Association
 Ron Thiessen, The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Manitoba Chapter
 Kenneth Klassen, Private Citizen
 Eric Reder, Wilderness Committee
 Jeff Franzmann, Private Citizen
 Natasha Szach, Private Citizen
 James Battershill, Keystone Agricultural Producers
 Jasmine Halick, Private Citizen
 Jarvis Brownlie, Private Citizen
 James Beddome, Green Party of Manitoba
 Kelvin Igwe, Private Citizen
 Laura Tyler, Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition
 Peter Miller, Green Action Centre
 David Berg, Private Citizen
 Mark Cohoe, Bike Winnipeg
 Jean Altemeyer, Private Citizen
 Georgina Garrett, Private Citizen
 Danielle Cayer, Private Citizen
 Ray Garnett, Private Citizen
 Curtis Hull, Climate Change Connection

October 25, 2018 meeting

Courtney Tosh, Private Citizen
 Gene Degen, Private Citizen
 Alanna Phillips, Private Citizen
 Hank Venema, Strategic Community Consulting
 Ian Walker, Private Citizen
 Dr. Barry Prentice, Private Citizen
 Zach Fleisher, Private Citizen
 Molly McCracken, Private Citizen
 Jazmin Alfaro, Private Citizen
 Gloria Taylor, Private Citizen
 Matthew Lawrence, Private Citizen
 Edward Burgener, Private Citizen
 Zainab Mansaray, Canada Sierra Leone Friendship Society Inc.
 Angela Reeves, Private Citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following 16 written submissions on **Bill (No. 16) – The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act / Loi sur la mise en œuvre du Plan vert et climatique**:

Joe Masi, Association of Manitoba Municipalities
 Jennifer Engbrecht, Private Citizen
 Barry Bisset, Private Citizen

Jennifer Sime, Private Citizen
 Jonathan Alward, Canadian Federation of Independent Business
 Joshua Leonhardt, Private Citizen
 Kurt Engbrecht, Private Citizen
 Peter Thomson, Private Citizen
 Mark Hudson, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba
 Yifei Huang, Private Citizen
 Ervin Bartha, Private Citizen
 Deborah Judith, Private Citizen
 Alex Green, Private Citizen
 Jennifer Lukovich, Private Citizen
 Joseph Kornelsen, Private Citizen
 Robin Bryan, Private Citizen

Bill Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 16) – The Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act / Loi sur la mise en œuvre du Plan vert et climatique**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment.

Mrs. Guillemard: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I am pleased to table the Annual Report for Addictions Foundation of Manitoba for 2017-2018.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Tree of Life Synagogue Condolences

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I rise today to express our heartfelt sympathies and condolences for the victims and their loved ones of Saturday's cowardly anti-Semitic attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh.

Eleven women and men peacefully celebrating their faith were killed by hate, by racism, by bigotry

and intolerance. Those who knew them and loved them are left grief-stricken.

We also remember all those who were injured during the attack, including the police officers, and we thank all those who assisted other congregants, police officers and first responders.

This act of horrendous anti-Semitic violence is a reminder that, collectively, society must stand resolutely against all forms of racism and hatred.

Tomorrow, Tuesday, October 30th, at 7 p.m., a vigil will take place at Shaarey Zedek synagogue. Here, Winnipeggers of all backgrounds will join in solidarity with all those who are hurting in the wake of this tragedy.

I know that all members of this House and, indeed, all Manitobans join our government in sending our deepest condolences and prayers to those families affected by this horrific tragedy and join the Jewish community in mourning today.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to now recite the names of the eleven worshippers who lost their lives while peacefully celebrating Shabbat that evening: Joyce Fienberg, Richard Gottfried, Rose Mallinger, Jerry Rabinowitz, David Rosenthal, Cecil Rosenthal, Bernice Simon, Sylvan Simon, Daniel Stein, Melvin Wax and Irving Younger.

Madam Speaker, I will now recite the Jewish prayer for the souls of the departed, known as the El Male Rachamim: God, full of compassion, dwelling on high, grant proper rest in the shelter of your presence in the ranks of the saintly and pure, radiant like the bright heavens, to the souls of all those whom we have remembered today as a blessing. As we pray that their souls may ascend, may they rest in the Garden of Eden. So, compassionate ruler, shelter them beneath your wings forever and gather their souls in the bond of life. God is their true inheritance, and may they rest in peace in their resting place, and let us pray—say amen.

Madam Speaker, I ask for leave of the House, once my colleagues have finished their statements, to observe a moment of silence for all those who senselessly and needlessly lost their lives.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank my colleague, the minister of Justice, for putting the names of the victims on the record. I know that her support and

friendship with Winnipeg's Jewish community is certainly appreciated in this time of great need.

On behalf of New Democrats in Manitoba, I would like to offer my condolences, both to the families of the victims of the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue over the weekend, but also to the members of the Jewish Diaspora across the world who feel threatened as a result of anti-Semitism and of violence such as we have recently seen visiting the city of Pittsburgh.

I know that Manitobans are outraged. Manitobans are saddened and Manitobans want better, and so as somebody who has the opportunity to speak out, I want to take that opportunity to say that not only do we condemn these acts of violence, but also that we recommit ourselves to fighting anti-Semitism in all its forms all around the world.

It was particularly haunting and unjust, I would say, that everyone whose lives were taken over the weekend were seniors. These are grandpas and grandmas. These are folks who were targeted, perhaps because they were among the most consistent attendees of this Shabbat service, and for the faithful to be rewarded with such an awful fate is, indeed, truly trying for those of us who practice a faith tradition, and yet we come out of it all the more determined and resolved to do better.

We know part of the reason that this is happening is because of the increasing spread of anti-Semitic and, in some cases, conspiratorial language across the Internet and in our public sphere. We have to put an end to it. I say, as an elected official, if my electoral success rests on putting another group of people down, then being elected is not worth it and I would not want to win such a victory.

Instead, I believe that we need to come together across lines of community, of faith, and support our Jewish relatives at this time, and I know that many of us will be there tomorrow to offer our solidarity and, of course, our condolences.

So at this time I would just like to close by offering the words of condolence from the Mourner's Kaddish: Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei raba b'alma di-v'ra.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Thank you to the members for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) and then Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) for your words of solace.

* (13:40)

Pittsburgh, like Winnipeg, is home to a large and close-knit Jewish community. This past Saturday an armed man stormed into Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh and killed 11 people, wounding another six during a Shabbat service. This was the worst attack on the Jewish community in United States history.

We want to reach out in solidarity to all those who are mourning at this time to let them know we stand with you. Your grief is our grief. Your pain is our pain because we share a common bond of humanity that is deeper than faith.

I'd like to take a moment to read out the names of the victims to honour them: Joyce Fienberg, Richard Gottfried, Rose Mallinger, Jerry Rabinowitz, Cecil Rosenthal, David Rosenthal, Bernice Simon, Sylvan Simon, Daniel Stein, Melvin Wax and Irving Younger. All were described by those close to them as decent, generous and faith-hearted.

We cannot begin to imagine the pain for those who've lost their loved ones in this way. We must remember that they should be defined by the lives they lived, and not only in the way they died.

There will be vigils and rallies held across Canada to commemorate the victims and their legacies and to unite to show our support for our Jewish friends, neighbours and family.

Martin Luther King said that darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that—that hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

And we can reflect on the Jewish concept of tikkun olam: that our duty as humans and as legislators is to repair the world. It is a never-ending task, Madam Speaker, but is a burden we all share.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable minister for Crown Services, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Citizens on Patrol Week

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): I rise today to recognize and celebrate the members of the Citizens on Patrol Program. I would like to remind all members of the House that this week, October 28th through November 3rd, has officially been proclaimed as Citizens on Patrol Program week.

The Citizens on Patrol Program is a grassroots movement specifically designed to serve as a highly visible, community-based crime deterrent. These mobilized citizens—they mobilize citizens to participate in a community-based crime prevention initiative in co-operation with local law enforcement.

Madam Speaker, COPP has been actively making a difference for 27 years, with 66 registered groups consisting of approximately 1,000 volunteers patrolling in 13 distinct regions across the province in their communities.

In every community, the establishment of COPP programs have resulted in drastic crime reduction. At a time when many of our communities are facing an influx of new and renewed safety concerns, COPP members have been—have never been more important to creating and sustaining a safer neighbourhood.

COPP members collectively patrolled over 21,000 hours in their communities in 2017. Also last year, COPP volunteers and other participating community groups spent over 450 hours participating in Manitoba Public Insurance's SpeedWatch Program.

Thanks to these efforts, over 15,000 vehicles were observed driving over the speed limit and those drivers were given a direct reminder to slow down and keep their communities safe.

We are grateful to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Winnipeg Police Service, the Brandon Police Service and the Winkler Police Service, as well as Manitoba Public Insurance, which all work tirelessly to support our regional COPP groups.

Madam Speaker, I would like to, on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly, offer our thanks to the hundreds of volunteers engaged in the Citizens on Patrol Program for their dedication and commitment to making Manitoba a safer place to live, work and raise a family.

Thank you.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Citizens on Patrol Week is an opportunity to celebrate the everyday Manitobans who volunteer their time to improving safety of their communities.

There are three goals to the Citizens on Patrol Program: deterrence by creating a presence in the community, education, and awareness.

There are currently 66 communities that have registered COPP programs. One in particular I would like to highlight is the Flin Flon group.

Running since 2014, the group has over 20 members and have logged over 900 volunteer hours. They meet all three goals of the COPP program by taking regular shifts patrolling at schools, crossing zones and to keep pedestrians safe on busy highways and to increase community awareness of the group. They also help to keep their streets safe by putting up speed reader boards for drivers and also notify police when they see impaired or dangerous drivers on the road.

The Flin Flon RCMP interim sergeant has called the group, and I quote, a valuable asset to the RCMP detachment and citizens of Flin Flon. End quote. They are another set of eyes and ears that have resulted in occurrences being reported that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

I am proud of all the hard work the members of the Flin Flon group and all other Citizens on Patrol groups put in to keep their communities safe.

If a community is interested in setting up their own Citizens on Patrol Program, their website has a step-by-step guide on how to get started.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, it's nice to rise in the House today in honour of the 17th annual Citizens on Patrol Week.

Since 1991, volunteers have been working to make our communities safer through patrols and community education. These groups have done wonders in helping communities throughout our province. To this day, there are 66 different Citizens on Patrol groups currently active throughout most of Manitoba.

It is important to recognize those who give up time from their days to make sure that we can enjoy ours safely. I would like to take a moment and thank

two groups of citizens that I personally have had the opportunity to go on patrol with.

First, the Bear Clan Patrol, who actually inspired the second group, 204 Neighbourhood Watch. While neither group is officially part of the Citizens on Patrol Program with the Province, both of these patrol groups have been instrumental in improving the sense of community safety and well-being in the North End, something that they have in common with other Citizens on Patrol programs here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, members of the Citizens on Patrol are much more than just volunteers; these are people who treat each other like family and they come together to try and make a difference in our communities. They truly do deserve our utmost respect and gratitude for the work that they do.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Lorette Thrifty Treasures and Taché Food Bank

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, it is no secret that in Dawson Trail we have many great organizations. Today it is my pleasure to present Lorette Thrifty Treasures and Taché Food Bank as two fantastic Dawson Trail organizations that have managed to impact their communities for the better.

Thrifty Treasures is a local Lorette second-hand store that has been in business for over 25 years. It is comprised of over 45 volunteers. These volunteers dedicate their hard work and time to making this organization a success.

They have done an immense amount of good for their community as well as surrounding areas. On top of being an important community gathering spot, they also encourage others to reuse and recycle. The items at the Thrifty Treasures are used to raise money for residents and charities. All money that is raised from the sale of items is directly put back into the community. In 2017 alone, through their hard work and dedication, \$30,000 in donations went to local families and worthy causes.

The Taché Food Bank, housed in the same facility, also aids families in need. The Taché Food Bank was started in 2002 after eight volunteers determined the assistance given to families at Christmastime by the Taché Christmas Hampers was needed throughout the whole year.

Since then, the organization has grown in volunteers as well as the amount of support they have been able to provide. The Taché Food Bank uses monetary donations to—they receive from businesses, schools, churches, et cetera, to purchase groceries for families that are facing financial hardship.

It is through the commitment and hard work of these volunteers that makes communities such as Lorette even stronger.

Please rise in joining me to acknowledge the Lorette Thrifty Treasures and Taché Food Bank for the outstanding hard work they do as Dawson Trail heroes.

* (13:50)

Mr. Lagassé: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to have the names entered into Hansard.

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

Lorette Thrift Treasures and Taché Food Bank representatives: Irene Bialek, Gail Bohemier, Rosemary du Bourg, Laury Cameron, Maria Clark, Sandra Deube, Eveline Fois, Myrna Friesen, Carol From, Bernadette Gregoire, Fern Jacques, Gary Jacques, Gill Johnson, Lena Klassen, Lise McDougall, Joan Mitosenka, Marie-Ange Prevost, Roger Prevost, Robert Redfern, Jeanette Rempel, Michelle de Rocquigny, Iris Swiderski, Louis Swiderski, Marilyn Toutant, Robert Toutant, Tiffany Van Osch, Michelle Zastre.

Dustin Wold

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I want to take some time today to highlight a great young man who joins us in the gallery by the name of Dustin Wold.

Now, Dustin is a competitor in the Special Olympics and has been since he was nine years old. Today he lives independently in south Winnipeg, but works in my constituency of Fort Rouge.

I had a chance to meet Dustin last week as part of Disability Employment Awareness Month when I joined him at Vita Health for Take Your MLA to Work Day. Now, he secured employment at Vita Health five years ago as a result of SCE LifeWorks' good work in the community, and Dustin has since then distinguished himself as an energetic and passionate young man who takes his position at Vita Health very seriously.

So we spent the time together reviewing what he does on a daily basis. We reviewed the produce, the vegetables, the milk products, making sure everything was presentable, nothing was expired. He walked me through the clean-up work that he does in the community. He walked me through the back of the store and the work that he does unloading pallets and stocking shelves, but the thing that stood out to me most was his great way of dealing with people. Both his coworkers, who were smiling to a person, talking about Dustin and how happy they are to have him on the team, but also to the customers, the members of the public who he graciously provided help to during our time there together.

Now, we know that the work of people like Dustin in the community is so very important, and that's why we want to thank both him but also the good people at LifeWorks. Because having a job is important, Madam Speaker. Definitely, it's about putting a paycheque in somebody's pocket, but it's also about the pride, the dignity and the sense of self-worth that comes along with that. So we want to say thank you today.

I should note for everyone that Dustin is a very hard-working man. In fact, he's on a break from Vita Health right now. So before he heads back to work, why don't we send him off with a great round of applause?

Thank you, Dustin Wold.

International Peace Garden

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 85th anniversary of International Peace Garden located in the heart of the Turtle Mountains in the constituency of Arthur-Virden. The Turtle Mountains are at the heart and centre of the American Great Plains, the American Midwest and the Canadian Prairies.

Inspired by the vision of Henry J. Moore, the concept of the International Peace Garden at the heart of the continent was nurtured into life at the international gardeners' association annual meeting in 1929. By 1932 vision was turned into plans that included location and first sketches of a garden that would tell the story between two great countries.

The International Peace Garden was established as a living symbol and tribute to the historic fact that Canada and the United States of America have been in peace with each other for more than 200 years.

Madam Speaker, more than 100,000 visitors each year enjoy the park's picnic area, modern campgrounds, music and sports camps, hiking trails, bike paths and wildlife refuge. The peace garden is also home to the largest cactus collection, displayed year-round in the peace garden's conservatory. Which—more than 150,000 flowers planted each summer, the guests are invited to enjoy the ever-changing displays.

This past summer the peace garden celebrated 85 years of commitment, dedication and success. With food, craft vendors, entertainment, music, games to—that great celebration enjoyed by all ages.

I would like to thank all the board members along with the CEO Tim Chapman and his amazing staff for their dedicated time and commitment to the International Peace Garden. Our countless hours do not—their countless hours do not go unnoticed. The garden speaks for itself. It is a place of peace.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Action on Climate Change

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, last week at committee this Conservative government—this very conservative government's—attitudes towards climate change were on full display.

I want to give voice to the dozens and dozens of Manitoba citizens who gave of their own time, their own passion and, in many instances, their professional expertise, which they offered for free to this government, and this government ignored them completely.

I'd like to quote from one presentation in particular from a young woman, a young mom named Ms. Natasha Szach, and she said as follows, quote: There are many reasons why I chose to come here today, but the one I want to share with you is my son. He was born in early July of this year. How will I explain to him that, at the critical moment, humanity did not have the political will to save the planet? There is no merit in selling a Climate and Green Plan to Manitobans that does anything less than what the science demands of us. End quote.

She encapsulated, in just those few sentences, a standard that this government and all future governments simply must meet. And when our caucus proposed that science—climate science, based on the best advice that the world's scientific community has to offer through the United Nations—

that that guide all government action plans on climate, this government voted those amendments down three times in a row.

And just how bad is the global situation? We have already increased our temperature on average around the world by one degree, and we are on track for four to six degrees of warming at a minimum, based on behaviour like what we've seen from the Pallister government so far.

They are also ignoring the enormous opportunities to create the new green jobs that young people today, in particular, are going to need to transition us to a healthy, sustainable future. They need to wake up and realize this is the 21st century, Madam Speaker.

Women Parliamentarians

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, today I am honoured to rise and acknowledge women parliamentarians past, present and future, in Manitoba and across the country.

This summer I was fortunate to attend the 56th annual CPA Canadian Regional Conference and the CWP Commonwealth—Canadian regional meetings in Ottawa. Being given the unique opportunity to participate in a panel discussion with like-minded women on the under-representation of women in our legislature was truly eye-opening, and it left a lasting impression on me.

As you know, Madam Speaker, I am one of 14 female MLAs who make up 25 per cent of the total number of elected members in this Legislature. I would like to take a moment to recognize all of the female MLAs, clerks and staff who work in this magnificent building, and yourself, Madam Speaker, for being a part of the everyday movement to break down barriers for all females as they pursue their dreams in politics.

I also wish to congratulate all of the female mayors, reeves, city councillors and school trustees who were elected during the municipal election last week. Preliminary results as reported by the AMM saw an overall increase of women elected officials across the province: 174 out of 879 of all elected officials were women, which represents a 3 per cent increase from 2014.

We know through awareness, education and engagement that we can help women and girls to realize their potential and achieve their

political aspirations in whatever role they envision themselves.

Empowerment builds confidence and inspiration sparks an interest, all of which will be the foundation for our future female leaders.

Madam Speaker, I would like to invite you and other members in the Legislature to join me as I honour all female elected representatives and say thank you for being a daily reminder of what can be done when a woman embraces her strength, follows her dream and believes in herself.

Thank you very much.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests that I would like to introduce to you.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery we have with us today His Excellency Dr. Beat Nobs, the Ambassador of Switzerland; and Ms. Elisabeth Bosch Malinen who is here as well as the honorary consul for Switzerland.

On behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

And also seated in the public gallery from Westgate Mennonite Collegiate we have 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Jeremy Siemens. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you here to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care Services WRHA Budget

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I'm going to table these documents which show that the Premier has ordered a \$36-million cut to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority this year.

* (14:00)

I am heading to Morden later on this evening—*[interjection]*—and I can hear that the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) is shouting out his encouragement for a safe trip.

But the bottom line is that this Minister of Health under the leadership of this Premier is ordering a cut for \$36 million to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

Now, we know the damage of the \$83-million cut that they handed down last year: nurses being forced to work mandatory overtime, crazy amounts of stress for them. We know that physiotherapy services were discontinued and there were tremendous reductions in the amount of services available to people needing health care in the city of Winnipeg.

The follow-up to that, apparently, Madam Speaker: cut \$36 million more from that budget for the Winnipeg health region. This impact will be felt at the bedside. This impact will be felt by people in Winnipeg and across the rest of the province.

The Premier needs to be clear: Will he abandon his plan to cut \$36 million from our health-care system?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Again, the member allows himself to erode his diminishing credibility on this and other issues, Madam Speaker, by putting false information on the record. The actual budgetary number for the Winnipeg RHA this year is a full \$45 million up, not down.

The actual budget for health care this year is a full \$600 million higher than it ever was under the NDP government.

And, Madam Speaker, neither of these numbers matter to Manitobans as much as getting better results, which we are.

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

Mr. Kinew: No, I think, is enough of a rebuttal for those pretty basic comments from the Premier.

We know that their plan is not working. We know that wait times are increasing since they began to close emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg.

But beyond that we know that they have ordered an in-year reduction. They are ordering another cut. Following the \$83-million cut last year, they're now ordering another cut of \$36 million in the Winnipeg health region.

Now, of course, this will impact patients in Winnipeg who want to get health care, but it'll also impact people right across the province because people have to come to Winnipeg for a great variety of health-care services and diagnostic tests.

So when you add the two cuts that they've handed down over the past two years, it's some

\$120 million less in health-care services. Those are the real numbers. That's the bottom line.

What we need to know, will—is, will the Premier listen to the front-line workers? Will he listen to the nurses and simply abandon his plans to cut health care in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: Nothing new over there, Madam Speaker. The member simply says no.

We inherited a system that was broken, that was ranked 10th of 10 across Canada and we say we need to face the challenges of change, and the member says no. We say we need to shorten wait times in emergency rooms because they are longer than everywhere else in Canada, and the member says no. We say we want to end the practice of moving people from emergency rooms to other facilities, and the member says no.

There are better results, Madam Speaker, even though the member does not care to admit it. This year, for example, a full 5 per cent decrease in the number of secondary transfers—that is, people who are going to an emergency room in reduced numbers now have to be transferred away from that facility they report at and to another facility—a thousand people this year alone did not have to be transferred, at great danger to them and at great hardship for their families.

I would like the member to be fair and acknowledge this is significant progress, just as Manitobans acknowledge there is significant progress.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, I'm a big fan of Elijah Harper—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and so the one thing I would acknowledge is some of the best parliamentarians ever to set foot in here do say no, and we say no to cutting health care.

Now, within this \$36-million cut that they have handed down to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority are some \$10 million in cuts that they want to see handed down in the form of staffing efficiencies. That means \$10 million less for front-line workers, the very people who will provide health care to patients at the bedside. Patient care will get worse as a result of this Premier's

\$36-million cut to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

We've already seen the impact that these cuts are having on nurses in the Winnipeg region: more mandatory overtime, nurses stressed out, nurses concerned that those conditions are going to compromise the quality of care for the patients that they are delivering care for.

Will the Premier listen to these front-line nurses and back off his plans to cut health care in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: I had the great honour of working with Elijah Harper, both here and at the federal House, Madam Speaker, and I can tell you that Elijah Harper didn't just say no, he said yes to facing the challenges of his own personal demons. He said yes to recovery from alcoholism. He said yes to property rights for indigenous people. He said yes to an east-side bipole route.

Elijah Harper's a friend of mine. That member is no Elijah Harper.

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

Bed Reduction Concerns

Mr. Kinew: So in a bizarre twist not only is the Premier cutting \$36 million to give Manitobans less health care, but he's also spending 33 and a half million dollars to also deliver less health care to people in Manitoba.

To explain what I mean, I will table this stack of documents here and—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —what this FIPPA shows is that the cost of the closures of emergency rooms and the urgent-care centre in Winnipeg will actually total some 33 and a half million dollars. So families in our province will now have to drive further and pay more in order to access fewer and fewer health-care options.

Now, keep in mind the first FIPPA, Madam Speaker, showed that they are reducing beds across the Winnipeg health region, and, again, they are paying more and more money to accomplish that outcome.

Will the Premier admit that his plan for cuts is actually all about the money and has nothing to do with improving health care?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member had a funny little preamble there where he talked all about money, and then I am supposed to admit it's all about the money when we're getting better results. I won't. I'll admit that it's about getting better results because that's what we're doing, Madam Speaker.

If you visit Vancouver they've got four emergency rooms, and that city is twice the size of Winnipeg. And for many, many years we had too many emergency rooms here and not enough services in them, so we faced the challenges of changing that, Madam Speaker.

Bigger, better, faster—that's how you get better results for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the Premier's rhetoric simply doesn't add up.

Now, he talks about the number of emergency rooms, but what he will never talk about is the number of beds available to Manitobans system-wide in the health-care system. The reason he doesn't want to talk about bed numbers is because he knows that he's reducing the number of beds that can care for Winnipeggers and all the other Manitobans who have to come to Winnipeg for health-care services.

Again, the first FIPPA that I tabled today shows that they're consolidating—or reducing—the number of beds in the Winnipeg health region. So he can keep talking about the number of ERs, but we know the truth, Madam Speaker: his cuts to health care are reducing the number of beds in the Winnipeg region and thereby reducing the quality of health care in our province.

Will the Premier simply accept that he's made a mistake, admit that his plan is all about saving money and instead recommit to investing in health care in our province?

Mr. Pallister: Well, of course not, Madam Speaker, because the member's equating quality health care to the number of beds, and if that was the case we should have 25 emergency rooms in Winnipeg; we'd have a lot more beds. The fact is people wouldn't be getting better care, though.

Madam Speaker, of course you need more beds when you zap people around from Victoria over to HSC, or from Seven Oaks over to St. Boniface, and that's what the NDP was doing and families were weeping as they got into their vehicle and chased an

ambulance back down the road after they'd already wept all the way to the first hospital. It doesn't make any sense.

Dr. Peachey's an expert. He gave the previous government advice. They didn't have the courage to act on it, and we are. But, Madam Speaker, what Dr. Peachey said was cities such as Vancouver, Calgary and Ottawa have fewer emergency departments per capita and shorter wait times.

People want shorter wait times. They don't go to hospital emergency rooms for fun, Madam Speaker. They go there to get care. That's what this government's committed to giving them.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, it's taken about a year, but finally the Premier admits that his plan is really about reducing the number of beds at hospitals in Winnipeg.

All the members out there, their monocles are popping out, the voices are rising up, the fingers are waving on the other side of the House as they now finally understand this Premier's plan for health care is to reduce—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the number of beds across the Winnipeg health region.

Now, this is what I think most Manitoba families don't agree with. The Premier is cutting funding. He's spending money on all these projects to reduce the money—or to reduce the amount of emergency rooms of Winnipeg. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: But at the end of the day, now they uncover that, in fact, there will be fewer beds to help take care of families in need in the province, Madam Speaker. It's a very startling revelation that the Premier has made here in the Chamber today.

* (14:10)

But at the end of the day, will we please see a Premier that will back off this plan for cuts and instead commit to increasing the number of beds to care for people right across Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: It was Nelson Mandela who wisely said that courage is never the absence of fear,

Madam Speaker, it is the willingness to act in the face of it.

The member has committed in his personal life to change. We haven't seen any demonstration of that commitment.

We are committed to changing the health-care system for the better in this province. We see no commitment from the member on that either.

Our concern is to see better health care for Manitobans. His 'constern'—his concern seems—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —solely to be to repeat the same, tired, empty, vacuous, ill-advised and wrong information and put it on the record here. He may continue to do that, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —but he will continue to be irrelevant in the debate about how to improve health care as long as he chooses to be irrelevant in that debate.

Emergency Treatment Fund Manitoba Participation Inquiry

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, this Pallister government appears incapable of dealing with addictions and the impact on our communities. Last Thursday, along Pembina Highway at rush hour, there was another incident: a stand-off putting police officers and the public at risk.

The minister's actions to date have been simply too little. Four provinces have already signed agreements with the federal government to access the Emergency Treatment Fund, a \$150-million fund to help provinces to address their own priorities for addictions.

Why hasn't the minister signed on to Emergency Treatment Fund?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I look forward to answering the member's question.

But I'll take my first opportunity to set the record straight because the leader of the opposition party is just making it up as he goes along. I'm certainly happy that that member isn't teaching mathematics at Westgate collegiate or anywhere else because he takes an investment of \$45 million more than the year before and calls it less. But we know that more

is not less; we're making good investments in the WRHA, but more importantly—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —we're getting better patient experience and better results.

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

Mr. Swan: The question was about addictions and the impact it's having on Manitobans.

Documents provided through freedom of information reveal steps the minister would need to take access—to access support from the \$150-million Emergency Treatment Fund. First, he would need to sign an agreement and, second of all, he would have to have an action plan.

In the face of both an opioid and a meth crisis in Manitoba, eight months after the treatment fund was announced and months after the final version of the VIRGO report was received, the minister has neither an agreement nor an action plan.

When will the government sign on to the Emergency Treatment Fund?

Mr. Friesen: The member raises a point about a very important issue to all Manitobans and I'm looking forward to answering his question.

But I do, first of all, want to address one other inaccuracy in the leader of the opposition's statements. Just because he says, it doesn't make it right. I want to remind him that ER wait times in the province of Manitoba are actually down, not up, by 25 per cent. So he should not, also, be teaching percentages in that mathematics class that he shouldn't be teaching.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary. *[interjection]* Order.

Mr. Swan: Well, if the Minister of Health wants to look at something that is way up, it's the number of Manitobans that are addicted to opioids and methamphetamine. We've heard that that number may be as high as 25,000.

For the third time now I'm going to put this question to the minister. His own briefing note from his department, dated May 30, 2018, about this fund, saying in order to access the funds Manitoba must enter into a bilateral agreement and include a five-year action plan detailing how the funding will

be used over fiscal years 2018-19, which is now, to 2022-23.

When will the minister get Manitoba onto the Emergency Treatment Plan and use this for an existing crisis?

Mr. Friesen: We know that detoxification from meth is a process that takes time, often more than the 30 days typical it requires for other substances. That's important. It also means that things like longer stays at facility treatments—or treatment facilities have to be entertained because these are all steps of addressing this very, very problematic substance use.

That member and all members should know that we are engaged, our share of that federal support would amount to around \$4.2 million. We've applied for the federal funding and conversations are ongoing.

Municipal Road and Bridge Program Request to Restore Funding

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

The Pallister government has gutted the Municipal Road and Bridge Program, cutting the funding level by 84 per cent. Communities like Gimli have seen their grant cut entirely. Over 80 communities have signed an AMM resolution calling on the Province to reinstate the program.

Will the Premier listen to rural Manitoba and restore this funding?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Of course, the member knows that we've had this discussion. I'll remind him again that on the eve of the biggest AMM convention, annually, Madam Speaker, they reduced and amalgamated—forced amalgamations on our rural partners. That's not the way to treat municipalities in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The—[interjection] Order.

The honourable member for Elmwood, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Maloway: I'm going to try again.

To the Premier, Madam Speaker: In their AMM resolution, communities called the program critical, predictable and effective for budgeting and planning purposes in order to address their infrastructure deficit. But now the minister has gutted the program by 84 per cent this year after years of stable funding. The City of Thompson has seen its funding cut in

half and over 80 communities have signed the resolution calling on the Pallister government to restore the funding.

Will the Premier now restore this funding?

Mr. Wharton: Again, I'll try to educate the member and members opposite on collaboration, Madam Speaker, one thing that they're definitely devoid of.

And I can tell you, Madam Speaker, the NDP had 17 years to re-evaluate programs in this province with our very valued partners right across the province, and including the City of Winnipeg.

While they sat on their hands doing nothing, Madam Speaker, we're going to get it right.

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

Mr. Maloway: Once again, the minister and the government are refusing to answer this question.

Madam Speaker, the Municipal Road and Bridge Program has been cut by 84 per cent this year. The minister suggests that there may be future programming to meet the needs, but communities aren't buying it. They know the budget was cut 84 per cent. Over 80 communities have signed that resolution calling on the Pallister government to reconsider its plans and restore funding to the Municipal Road and Bridge Program.

Will the minister restore this funding?

Madam Speaker: The honourable—[interjection] Order.

Mr. Wharton: We have, and our government has approved, over 30 projects in 30 municipalities right across Manitoba in the road and bridge program—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —in this year alone, any year, Madam Speaker.

As we work collaboratively with our partners to transition to new bilateral funding with the federal government, Madam Speaker, we'll ensure that programs like the road and bridge program will be around and sustainable for the long haul.

Crown Services Minister Hydro Responsibilities

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, since the recent Cabinet shuffle in August, the Minister for Crown

Services has been very reserved about her new role. She's in charge of Manitoba liquor, lotteries and cannabis, yet the entire file has been handled by others. She didn't show up at the release of a catastrophic Hydro report that involved criminal allegations. She's refusing to comment on a \$2.5-million inquiry into Keeyask and bipole.

Manitoba Hydro is borrowing more than \$2 billion this year alone and its debt is approaching that of the Province as a whole. The Hydro is a file that has the potential to make or break Manitoba.

Can the minister explain her silence, or would the Premier prefer to do it for her?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I think the member's words have removed all doubt, Madam Speaker, of his desire to see higher taxes in Manitoba, to see bigger subsidies, to see higher business taxes. He has proclaimed already, repeatedly, that the previous NDP government's problem wasn't that they spent too much while they doubled our debt, but that they should have spent more.

* (14:20)

He would reinstate the vote tax. He wants us to borrow more on the backs of children in our province and their future. These are the wrong kinds of things to want, Madam Speaker, but he chooses to want them anyway.

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

Mr. Lamont: The Premier's powers of invention are truly awesome, Madam Speaker.

When the Premier shuffled his Cabinet in August, the mandate letters that were handed out were exactly the same as they were in May 2016, even with the same names. They were only updated two months later.

In the 'minister's' mandate letter from two and a half years ago, it directs the then-minister of Manitoba Hydro to set up Efficiency Manitoba, cut red tape and review the bipole project with the new board of Manitoba Hydro. To date, none of this has been done because the Premier refused to meet with his hand-picked board and they resigned en masse, saying this government shares equally in the blame with the NDP for the mess of Hydro.

If Hydro's new board finds exactly the same problems that the board that quit did, does this

minister have the authority to act or is it still the Premier alone who's going to be responsible for ignoring the problems at Hydro?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, the only truth in the member's preamble was the last four words. There are problems at Hydro and we're addressing those problems.

In respect of his other performance responsibilities, the issues that he's raised thus far have been a proposal to raise taxes and a proposal that he have larger amounts of office space. We disagree with both.

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

Hazardous Waste Sites Re-issuing of Licences

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): The Minister of Crown Services (Mrs. Mayer) is tasked with implementing the Pallister green plan, which promises to clean up contaminated sites. The same minister is also tasked with the red tape reduction bill which means that companies don't need a new licence to set up a new hazardous waste disposal site.

This government has been complicit with the NDP in withholding test results for years, showing dangerous levels of lead contamination, in part, due to hazardous waste disposal sites. This—the report sat for 10 years, under both governments, and it refers to previous reports of lead contamination with no action going back to the 1980s.

If cleaning up contaminated sites is a priority for this government, why are they making it easier to create new ones?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Ten years under both governments; nine years and 11 months, and approximately one month, I think, Madam Speaker, the comparatives, but the point is that we've acted. This minister, this government took action on an issue that was covered up for a long time. The member should be applauding that rather than trying to make an issue out of it and criticize us for taking the action that was negligent under the previous government for a decade.

That being said, the member is continuing to represent Ottawa to Manitobans and stand up for a carbon tax and against a green plan for our province, Madam Speaker.

We say yes to the green plan. We say no to the carbon tax.

**Judicial Nomination Committee
Appointment of Indigenous Members**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I want to take a moment to acknowledge Maria Klaric and her twelve-year-old daughter Nicole who tragically lost their lives in a senseless act of arson. Certainly, we send our love and strength to all of their families during this difficult time, Madam Speaker.

It's long been a practice in the Manitoba—in Manitoba to appoint an indigenous person to the judiciary nominating committees. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) appears to have stopped this practice.

I ask the Minister of Justice again if he would reconsider and appoint an indigenous person to the judicial nominating committee for the next appointment and every appointment thereafter.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Certainly, on our side of the House we want to acknowledge the loss of life from last year, too, and certainly express our condolences to the family and friends. These are clearly tragic events that have happened in our community from time to time.

I will inform the member opposite that we have four judges just recently appointed to the Provincial Court. Three of them are women. One of these is a visible minority and another has a disability, so we are certainly making progress in terms of our appointments here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. John's, on a supplementary question.

**Indigenous Lawyers
Q.C. Designations**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): And of those four, none of them are indigenous, Madam Speaker.

The Pallister government reinstatement of the honorary designation of Queen's Counsel provides an opportunity to promote excellent indigenous practitioners of law, but, unfortunately, of the 62 practising lawyers who 'courently'—currently hold a Q.C. designation, not one of them is identified as indigenous or as a visible minority of any kind.

The former and current minister have provided no direction to ensure that it—these designations reflect the diversity in practising law.

I would ask if he'll reconsider and take steps to change the terms of reference of how these designations are given and ensure that indigenous lawyers are better represented.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): We're not going to be taking lessons from members opposite. Under our government, there's been more indigenous people appointed to ABCs in Manitoba than ever before.

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

**Judicial System
Diversity Promotion**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Whether it is the designation of Queen's Counsel or the appointment of indigenous justices, the Pallister government has not taken the steps necessary to promote wider diversity amongst those practising the law.

If there is anything to be learned from the Stanley and Cormier trials, it is the urgency that indigenous peoples—and, in particular, our youth—see themselves reflected in the judiciary as agents of change and in positive lights.

And so in an era of reconciliation, I ask the minister if he will reconsider and immediately take action so that we as indigenous peoples can better see ourselves as equitable partners in delivering justice in this province?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm comforted by the thought that now the opposition actually agrees with the Queen's Counsel process. We just opened that process up for admission and we look forward to people putting forward not only their own names, but names of other lawyers, prominent lawyers, in Manitoba. We certainly look forward to that.

And obviously, as I said, we as a government have appointed more indigenous people to agencies, boards and commissions than any other government previously.

**Manitoba Hydro Power Sale
New SaskPower Partnership**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Madam Speaker, Manitoba is one of if not Canada's greenest province for energy generation.

Today, we saw Manitoba Hydro and SaskPower make a serious announcement related to our clean, green renewable energy.

Can the Minister of Crown Services elaborate on this positive announcement today in the House?

Hon. Colleen Mayer (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank the member for Lac du Bonnet for that wonderful question.

Manitoba is Canada's greenest province due to Manitoba Hydro's renewable supply of clean energy. And today, yes, Manitoba Hydro and SaskPower signed a significant term sheet representing an increase in hydroelectricity exports to Saskatchewan—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mayer: —of up to 215 megawatts, beginning in 2022.

I encourage both utilities, Madam Speaker, to continue these discussions. I encourage the federal government to support and to continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with our western neighbours.

Thank you.

First Nations Communities Road Maintenance Agreements

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Three of my communities have been asking for their road maintenance agreements to be affirmed. It only makes sense that, since the First Nations have the equipment and the skills to maintain their portions of highway roads, that they be awarded those contracts within their traditional lands. Indeed, there are not many opportunities for employment in my First Nations, so we'd like to hold on to the meagre opportunities the Province gives us.

Can the minister explain to us why these contracts were not awarded to those First Nations? If this government—is this government really that comfortable in holding us back?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I wish to advise the member that we continue to work with our partners in the federal government and with our First Nation partners, and we will continue to sign contracts with our First Nations.

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

Ms. Klassen: If only that were true.

I'd like to quote from the minister's mandate letter: She is to further reconciliation through a principled approach that will enhance opportunities for economic development with full participation of indigenous communities.

Knowing that these First Nations were not awarded these contracts, we'd like to know what her department is doing to ensure that, going forward, these First Nations will win those contracts.

* (14:30)

Will the minister now use her full 45 seconds to regale us of all the efforts in respect of this, and perhaps she can even name those three First Nations and their respective chiefs?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I could spend a lot of time naming our First Nations and their chiefs, and—but I'll take the opportunity instead to congratulate the many chiefs and councils that are newly elected.

We've had several elections in the fall season, and we look forward to—we haven't met them all personally, but we look forward to that, and we'll continue the dialogue that we've had in the past in all the issues that they bring forward.

Transportation and roads in, as well as economic development, are important to them, and we've had the best discussions. They have not had the opportunity in previous years to discuss these issues with the government in Manitoba.

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

Ms. Klassen: It's disappointing that she couldn't name those three First Nations.

This government does not work well with others, especially not with my people, as is evidenced by the many upcoming lawsuits against this government. So when I read that there would 'blee' another major review with price water coopers Canada regarding contract tendering, I was alarmed.

Will the minister enter into true consultations with First Nations in drafting the terms of reference for the review when it impacts First Nations or when it involves cost-sharing with INAC? Can the minister also table a copy of what—the terms of reference for First Nations review?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, we've advanced a reconciliation strategy working, and committed to continuing to work, with First Nations. We have settled over 600,000—there are 600,000 acres set apart as TLE land. We've negotiated over 70,000 acres in the last—in the first two years of our mandate.

Duty-to-consult framework—we're working co-operatively with First Nations; Northern Healthy Foods Initiative; Operation Return Home—where the previous government couldn't get folks back to their communities, we have; Look North strategy; Manitoba-First Nations Mineral Development Protocol.

We're making significant gains by working in co-operation with First Nations communities; Canada-Manitoba First Nation highway signage project, and many, many others, Madam Speaker; Freedom Road.

And so there are numerous examples of progress being made through co-operative strategies. This government is following them. I only wish that the member would take a more positive attitude towards these issues.

Greyhound Service Departure Service Gap in Thompson

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): We were concerned that Manitobans would suffer if this government did nothing to help people affected by Greyhound departure. The minister held up his hands and said, don't worry, don't worry, private business will solve the problem.

Now we've learned, on Thursday the people of Thompson will have no public transportation for at least two weeks—probably longer—because Greyhound was the local transit provider. In 2017, people of Thompson used Greyhound's public transportation 53,000 times for work, school and health care.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure share his plan today to help those people in Thompson get to work, go to school, access health care as of November 1st?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): It's now—like—an opportunity to congratulate and welcome mayor Colleen Smook as the new mayor of Thompson. I'm looking forward—I spoke to Colleen—Mayor Smook last week—or this week, as a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, and she's

excited to get started, and we're looking forward to working with her.

And it is very disappointing that the federal government didn't act on our call, Madam Speaker, to extend the Greyhound by 60 days so we can ensure that service across Manitoba will be supported by the private sector.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Starting November 1st, low-income people in Thompson are worried they will have to beg for rides while they wait for private business to solve this problem. This government has ignored this problem for months. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: We've heard from Bobbi Montean who says that she uses transit to get to medical appointments as often as two or three times a week. She says that she may not be able to get to her appointments now, to—or to get groceries or to get out and socialize. Ms. Montean says that walking is not an option for her, and she doesn't have money for taxis.

The minister has known for months about this problem. Why has he done absolutely nothing?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, while we were out in front of this issue asking the federal government to extend the Greyhound contract by another 60 days, the NDP party chose to do nothing and never once did they raise their voice on this issue.

Madam Speaker, we are very pleased that the private sector has risen to the challenge in a very short order to do a lot of the runs, and we are still going to work with a lot of the operators to ensure that something comes forward between here and Thompson.

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

Mr. Lindsey: We know that sustainable public transport is vital for the economy and the environment. It's also vital for social well-being of communities.

This government cut transit funding across Manitoba, including Thompson, and now with no public transport available as of November 1st, people in Thompson are worried—worried that they won't be able to get where they need to go.

The Minister for Infrastructure has known about this approaching deadline for months. We know that he's done nothing to protect northern Manitobans. Did he not think to talk to Thompson MLA about the struggles that northern Manitobans will face?

Did he or the MLA for Thompson ever discuss this, and do they actually have a plan for how people are going to get around in Thompson on November 1st?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I want to say to the member that he needs to be extremely confident, as we are, in the capabilities of the member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle). He's a fine MLA.

I don't know, maybe the member would like to, in his next preamble, share with the House the reaction he's getting at home as he advocates for leave it in the ground, up in Flin Flon, or as he promotes the idea of northerners paying a higher carbon tax on fuel and home heating.

I'm interested in him sharing with the House how much support he's getting at the doors when he speaks to the people there about the need for them to be paying higher and higher taxes on things that are essential to them while the people on the east side of the Ottawa River get exempted from those very things.

I'm curious as to why he would think that the people of Flin Flon would support the philosophy of leave it in the ground or a higher carbon tax. But perhaps he's getting different feedback than what I'm getting, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Manitoba Labour Market Employment Forecast

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Madam Speaker, since being elected, our government has been committed to rebuilding our economy and making Manitoba the most improved province.

Making Manitoba the most improved province means cleaning up the mess left by the NDP. Making Manitoba the most improved province means getting results. I want to thank all the ministers here today, and especially the Premier (Mr. Pallister), for sharing many positive results with us today in the House.

But there's even more. There is even more. There's a recent Manitoba labour market outlook report that shows that we're continuing to clean

up that mess left by the NDP, shows continued improvements.

I ask the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade if he can please update the House on the key findings in that report.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I thank the member for Radisson for that great question.

And as this government moves to fix the finances, repair the services and rebuild the economy, that is shown. And one of the key findings from this study was that we'll see a total of 168,700 job openings created between now and 2024, and a forecast, also approximately 24,100 total job openings per year, which is important from all over-labour mobility standpoint.

Where the NDP failed, we will get it right.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition—[*interjection*] Order. Order.

Manitoba Hydro Premier's Comments

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, I read with great interest The Globe and Mail on Saturday, where the Premier had a letter to the editor, and imagine my surprise when the Premier talked about Manitoba Hydro as an investment. He talked about Hydro as an investment that Manitobans had made.

Of course, that doesn't match up with all the rhetoric that he's been spewing since the last provincial election. All the doom and gloom, all the negativity about Hydro that he's been saying, turns out he doesn't really believe it because he recognizes, like we do, that Manitoba Hydro is an investment in a green future for Manitoba.

Now, of course, I don't expect him to say thank you to the NDP for building up Hydro over all these years, Madam Speaker—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —but—[*interjection*]-that's right; he doesn't need to say thanks.

But will he now admit that Hydro needs to be built up by a government and not torn down, and will he further admit that he must keep Manitoba Hydro public for generations to come? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We should finish our questions earlier more often, don't you think?

Well, since the member is using media for research, I really like the Winnipeg Sun article where they talked about how he was making all the criticisms on health care up. I really like the Globe and Mail article where he actually urged the federal government to cut \$67 million of carbon-low-carbon-economy money for Manitoba.

And I particularly liked the Winnipeg Free Press article where he claimed he supported our green plan, Madam Speaker. These are wonderful reading. The member has to decide which side of these issues he's on eventually, and the media coverage is showing he's having difficulty deciding which side.

The one I found most humorous, Madam Speaker, was the article, I believe in Winnipeg Sun, where he claimed that he had a plan to balance the budget. We're waiting for that one.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

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

During orders of the day on Wednesday, June 7th, 2018, the honourable member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) raised a matter of privilege regarding remarks made by the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin) in a member's statement on June 6th, 2018. The honourable member for Kewatinook indicated that the remarks in question alluded to another member's past issues with the law prior to his tenure as an MLA. She suggested that these statements should not be taken lightly, and that due to these comments, she felt her ability to do her job as an MLA was being impeded. The honourable member for Kewatinook further added that: Many people within our communities who have criminal backgrounds have worked hard to turn their lives around, and: To repeatedly bring up a person's past issues with the legal system serves no end. And, as she continued to say: It only tears someone down. End quote. She concluded her remarks by moving, and I quote, "that this matter be

referred to a committee of this Legislature." End quote.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), the honourable member for Morris, the honourable member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) and the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran) all spoke to the matter before I took it under advisement to consult the authorities.

I must preface my remarks by reminding members that, as your Speaker, I must evaluate any privilege submission on its procedural merits only, as it is not any Speaker's role to make a determination on the issues leading to the allegation of a breach of privilege. The Speaker's role is narrow in this regard, and I would ask members to bear this in mind.

As members will know, there are two conditions which must be met to demonstrate a prima facie case of privilege: has the matter been raised at the earliest opportunity, and has the member demonstrated sufficient evidence to prove that privileges of the House have been breached?

With regard to the question of timeliness, the honourable member for Kewatinook indicated that she wanted to check Hansard before proceeding with her privilege submission. This is a reasonable point, and I would say that she has met the test of timeliness.

Regarding the second condition, the requirement to demonstrate sufficient evidence to prove that privileges have been breached, I have considered many factors.

The honourable member for Kewatinook referenced the first edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, quoting page 83 which states, and I quote: The assaulting, menacing or insulting of any member on the floor of the House while he or she is coming or going from the House, or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding of parliament, is a violation of the rights of parliament. Any form of intimidation of a person for or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in parliament could amount to contempt. End quote.

While the member accurately identified an improper concept relating to privilege, this particular reference is a quotation from a 1989 House of Commons privilege ruling relating to interactions between a Member of Parliament and a member of the public and is therefore not precisely relevant to this matter.

I must note at this point that, while the honourable member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) stated that the remarks in question by the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin) impeded her ability to do her job, she did not demonstrate how her privileges were breached in this matter. However, she did raise some very important issues with her with her submission which I believe merit further discussion.

In consideration of the matter raised, we must carefully examine the concept of freedom of speech in the legislative context. Freedom of speech is one of the most important principles underlying the function of this and any Canadian legislature. It is, in fact, one of the main pillars of parliamentary privilege.

Bosc and Gagnon devote considerable attention to this topic in the third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. On page 89 they state that, and I quote: By far the most important right according to members of the House is the exercise of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings. It has been described as a fundamental right without which members would be hampered in the performance of their duties. It permits them to speak in the House without inhibition, to refer to any matter or express any opinion as they see fit, to say what they feel needs to be said in the furtherance of the national interest and the aspirations of their constituents. End quote.

On page 92 they expand on this concept, nothing that, and I quote: Freedom of speech permits members to speak freely in the Chamber during a sitting or in committees during meetings while enjoying complete immunity from prosecution or civil liability for any comment they might make. Though this is often criticized, the freedom to make allegations which the member genuinely believes at the time to be true or at least worthy of investigation is fundamental. The House of Commons could not work effectively unless its members were able to speak and criticize without having to account to any outside body. In ruling on a question of privilege in 1984, Speaker Bosley affirmed that, and I quote: The privilege of a Member of Parliament when speaking in the House or in a committee is absolute, and that it would be very difficult to find that any statement made under the cloak of parliamentary privilege constituted a violation of that privilege. End quote

Examining the remarks in question through this lens, one must conclude that the honourable member for Morris was within his rights to make such comments. However, Bosc and Gagnon also emphasize the need for judicious use of the privilege of freedom of speech and of the necessity to take great care in the exercise of this privilege. On pages 97 and 98 they address issues relating to freedom of speech, noting that, and I quote: The privilege of freedom of speech is an extremely powerful immunity and on occasion Speakers have had to caution members about its misuse. Ruling on a question of privilege in 1987, Speaker Fraser spoke at length about the importance of freedom of speech and the need for care in what members say. End quote.

And here I will quote directly from Speaker Fraser's 1987 ruling. Quote: There are only two kinds of institutions in this land to which this awesome and far-reaching privilege of freedom of speech extends, Parliament and the legislatures on the one hand and the courts on the other. These institutions enjoy the protection of absolute privilege because of the overriding need to ensure that the truth can be told, that any questions can be asked and that debate can be free and uninhibited. Such a privilege confers grave responsibilities on those who are protected by it. By that, I mean specifically the honourable members of this place. The consequences of its abuse can be terrible. Innocent people could be slandered with no redress available to them. Reputations could be destroyed on the basis of false rumour. All honourable members are conscious of the care they must exercise in availing themselves of their absolute privilege of freedom of speech. That is why there are long-standing practices and traditions observed in this House to counter the potential for abuse. End quote. I will note that the practices and traditions Speaker Fraser references here include the rules and practices of the House with respect to the content of speeches and the use of unparliamentary language.

* (14:50)

Bosc and Gagnon also cite a 1994 ruling from Speaker Parent which emphasized the need for members to use great care in exercising their right to speak freely in the House, and I quote: "Paramount to our political and parliamentary systems is the principle of freedom of speech, a member's right to stand in this House unhindered to speak his or her mind.

"However, when debate in the House centres on sensitive issues, as it often does, I would expect that members would always bear in mind the possible effects of their statements and hence be prudent in their tone and choice of words." End quote.

More recent House of Commons rulings also emphasize the need for care and caution in the exercising of freedom of speech, as Bosc and Gagnon note in a 2014 ruling from Speaker Scheer when he cautioned the House on the limits of freedom of speech, stating that, and I quote: "All members bear a responsibility, individually and collectively, to select the words they use very carefully and to be ever mindful of the serious consequences that can result when this responsibility is forgotten." End quote.

I reference all of this at such length to clearly illustrate for members the complexities of our privilege to the right of freedom of speech in this place. We, the select few who are chosen by the citizens of this province, have a profound responsibility to represent them with wisdom and dignity and to exercise exactly this kind of care every single time we rise to speak in this Chamber.

I urge mindfulness to all members whenever you open your mouths in this place, on or off the record. Be careful of the complex history of this great country. Be mindful of the impact the comments you make here may have on the outside community. Be mindful of the journey that many people take out of challenging circumstances in life towards a better future. Be mindful that personal attacks do not advance an argument and have no place in this Legislature.

From a strictly procedural perspective, and in consideration of all of the factors I have noted, I must respectfully rule that the honourable member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) has not demonstrated a prima facie case of privilege.

However, I would caution all honourable members of this House, especially those who heckle or interject during debates, to be mindful of the messages in this ruling and strive to do better for your constituents, your friends and families, and yourselves.

PETITIONS

Vimy Arena

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of St. James and other areas of Manitoba—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Fletcher: —are concerned with the intention expressed by the provincial government to use the Vimy Arena site as a Manitoba Housing project.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and neither the provincial government nor the City of Winnipeg considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial sites such as—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Fletcher: —the St. Boniface Industrial Park, the three–20,000 acres at CentrePort or existing properties such as the Shriners Hospital or the old Children's Hospital on Wellington Crescent.

(3) The provincial government is exempt from any zoning requirements that would have existed if the land was owned by the City of Winnipeg. This exemption bypasses community input and due diligence and ignores better uses for the land which would be consistent with a residential area.

(4) There are no standards that one would expect for a treatment centre. The Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living has stated that the Department of Health had no role to play in the land acquisition for this Manitoba Housing project for use as a drug addiction facility.

(5) The Manitoba Housing project initiated by the provincial government changes the fundamental nature of the community. Including park and recreation uses, concerns of the residents of St. James and others regarding public safety, property values and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

(6) The concerns of the residents of St. James are being ignored while obvious other locations in wealthier areas and neighbourhoods, such as Tuxedo and River Heights, have not been considered for this Manitoba Housing project, even though there are hundreds of acres of land available for development at Kapyong Barracks or parks like Heubach Park that share the same zoning as the Vimy Arena site.

(7) The Manitoba Housing project and the operation of a drug treatment centre fall outside the statutory mandate of the Manitoba Housing renewal corporation.

(8) The provincial government does not have a co-ordinated plan for addiction treatment in Manitoba, as it currently underfunds treatment centres which are running far under capacity and potential.

(9) The community has been misled regarding the true intention of Manitoba Housing, as land is being transferred for a 50-bed facility, even though the project is clearly outside of Manitoba Housing responsibility.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) 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.

(2) To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of public land along Sturgeon Creek for the purpose of parkland and recreational activities for public use, including being an important component of the Sturgeon Creek Greenway Trail and the Sturgeon Creek ecosystem under the current designation of PR2 for the 255 Hamilton Ave. location at the Vimy Arena site, and to maintain the land to be—to continue to be designated for parks and recreation activity, neighbourhoods and communities.

This petition has been signed by Susan Cowell, Samantha Sommerfield, Beverley Franklin and many other Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Medical Laboratory Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private sector service.

It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services, to allow medical clinics to seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

Under the present provincial government, Dynacare, an Ontario-based subsidiary of a US company, has acquired Unicity labs, resulting in a monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

With the creation of this monopoly, there's been the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has made it more difficult for some medical offices by changing the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charging some medical offices for collection services.

These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services. The situation is particularly critical for patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life-threatening, based on their individual health situations.

* (15:00)

Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all patients requiring immediately results, STATs patients, such as patients with suspicious internal infections, be directed to its King Edward location. This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab rather than simply completing the test in their doctor's office. This new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patients' health. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms, rather than travelling twice, which increases costs to the public health-care system.

Medical clinics and physicians' offices service thousands of patients in their communities and have structured their offices to provide a one-stop service, acting as a health-care front line that takes off some of the load from emergency rooms. The creation of this monopoly has been problematic to many medical clinics and physicians, hampering their ability to

provide high-quality and complete service to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to request Dynacare to reopen the closed laboratories or allow Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to freely open labs in clinics which formerly housed labs that have been shut down by Dynacare.

To urge the provincial government to ensure high-quality lab services for patients and a level playing field and competition in the provision of laboratory services to medical offices.

To urge the provincial government to address this matter immediately in the interest of better patient-focused care and improved support for health professionals.

Signed by Karen Strohel [*phonetic*], Leslie Manness, Cynthia Selley and many, many others.

Concordia Hospital Emergency Room

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government has announced the closures of three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg, including closing down the emergency room at Concordia Hospital.

(2) The closures come on the heels of the closing of a nearby QuickCare clinic, as well as cancelled plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes, such as Park Manor, that would have provided important services for families and seniors in the area.

(3) The closures have left families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg without any point of contact with front-line health-care services and will result in them having to travel 20 minutes or more to St. Boniface Hospital's emergency room for emergency care.

(4) These cuts will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in northeast Winnipeg and visit the emergency room frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or are low income.

(5) The provincial government failed to consult with families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg regarding the closing of their emergency room or to consult with health officials and health-care workers

at Concordia to discuss how this closure would impact patient care in advance of the announcement.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Concordia Hospital's emergency room so that families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health-care services.

And this petition was signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

Speaker's Ruling (Continued)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I need to make a correction to the matter of privilege that I was just dealing with, and I would like to indicate that in paragraph 8 I should have said: while the member accurately identified an important concept relating to privilege. And I would like to clarify that for the record.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On a matter of House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet tomorrow, Tuesday, October 30th, 2018, at 6 p.m. to consider the reappointment of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet tomorrow, Tuesday, October 30th, 2018, at 6 p.m., to consider the reappointment of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Information and Privacy Adjudicator.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Would you please call for second reading Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act. Following that, Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act and following completion of those two bills, would you

please resume us into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 34.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider this afternoon second readings of Bill 223, to be followed by second reading of Bill 228, to be followed by Committee of the Whole on Bill 34.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 223—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: So, therefore, we will start with Bill 223, the child and—therefore, we will resume debate on second reading of Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Southdale (Mr. Smith), who has five minutes remaining.

Does—is the member—is—the member's indicating that he will not be commenting any more on Bill 223.

An Honourable Member: It's all been said.

Madam Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak on debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act.

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

Bill 228—The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to resuming debate on second reading of Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), who has seven minutes remaining.

Is there leave to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has not been given for the matter to stand.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act.

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

House Business

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Yes, Madam Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, October 31st, 2018, and, if necessary, on Thursday, November 1st, 2018, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 29, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Safe Hunting and Shared Management); Bill 35, the crown lands amendment act, improved management of community pastures and agriculture Crown lands; Bill 36, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Impaired Driving Offences); Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; and Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, October 31st, 2018, and, if necessary, on Thursday, November 1st, 2018, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 29, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Safe Hunting and Shared Management); Bill 35, The Crown Lands Amendment Act (Improved Management of Community Pastures and Agricultural Crown Lands); Bill 36, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Impaired Driving Offences); Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; and Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act.

Mr. Goertzen: I'd also like to announce that the Standing Committee on Private Bills will meet on Wednesday, October 31st, 2018, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 216, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act; and Bill 230, The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day Act.

* (15:10)

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Private Bills will meet on

Wednesday, October 31st, 2018, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 216, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, and Bill 230, The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day Act.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The—as indicated previously, we will now—the House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 34.

Just as a reminder to the House, as per the sessional order adopted on June 25th, 2018, on days when the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act is considered in the Committee of the Whole, the House will sit until 6:30 p.m. instead of rising at 5 p.m.

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 34—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order.

Today, we will be continuing consideration of Bill 34, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. As agreed by the committee on October 22nd, 2018, questioning on this bill will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Yes, well, it's a little unusual to be still going through this process in the fall, but we'll use that to our advantage.

I want to welcome staff who've come in, so we're hopeful we'll get some answers this afternoon.

First thing I want to do is follow up on some questions I'd asked the previous minister of Finance in the spring. We should be in a much better position now to get answers.

I just want to go to the budget papers from the spring, the 2018-19 Estimates, page 141. At that time it was budgeted that the estimated revenue from equalization from the Government of Canada was going to be \$2,036,900,000.

Is the minister able to confirm—is that, as far as we know, on track, or are we expecting a different amount of equalization?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Yes. With—what happens is in early to mid-December is when the equalization number comes out, so the equalization number is really set in December for the previous year, so the number that was announced for the equalization portion of things stays consistent.

Mr. Swan: Sorry, just to make that clear, that number that was contained in the budget papers for this fiscal year, was the amount that was revealed last December? Is that correct?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, it is. Yes.

Mr. Swan: Also, on that note, the amount that was contained in the budget papers on page 141 for the Canada Health Transfer, or the CHT, was one billion, four hundred and forty-one thousand, one—I'm sorry; let me start that again: \$1,441,100,000.

Can the minister confirm, now that we're in late October, is that now a firm number or could there still be adjustments that would change the amount of that receipt from the Government of Canada?

Mr. Fielding: Yes. The monies that flow from Ottawa represent somewheres in the neighbourhoods of 27 per cent overall. It's made up of three different categories. One is the equalization payment and the number essentially comes out in December. The other two are for health transfers and social service transfers.

The health transfers, to your question, can be adjusted. It's based on a per—or based on a population based and they can go back up to two years, so once they have the exact numbers in terms of populations from Manitoba that can be adjusted, and I think that's done on a routine basis. But, again, they can go back up to two years, based on inflows and outflows of individuals in Manitoba.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that answer and so, subject to there being an adjustment, if Manitoba's population is growing faster than expected, I expect that would mean more money from the federal government as part of this transfer.

If Manitoba's growing more slowly than anticipated, that could result in less money. But, as of today, late October, the minister doesn't expect there will be any changes in year of the amount of the Canada Health Transfer received from the Government of Canada.

Mr. Fielding: There isn't going to be substantial changes, but from a reporting basis after the second

term, a second quarter is reported. They'll make those adjustments a part of that quarterly adjustment.

Mr. Swan: All right. I thank the minister for that, and even though it's a bit outside of my portfolio, because we're here I'll ask the question. I presume it's the same answer for the Canada Social Transfer or the CST. The estimate of revenue is \$517,000,500—or \$500,000. I presume the only adjustment now that would be expected would be an adjustment if the population has grown more quickly or less quickly than anticipated.

Is that fair?

* (15:20)

Mr. Fielding: Yes, the principle is the same and the adjustments would be, accordingly, depending on, again, just population growths, whether they contrast or they expand in terms of the amount of people that are coming into—in and out of Manitoba.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister.

Can the minister in his own words explain why the equalization being received from the Government of Canada is \$216,500,000 more than it was the year before?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, and so with that the money will stay somewhat consistent. It is really based on growth. It is also based on the parameters that are set forth in the equalization payment. There was very recently a review. I guess they do kind of a five-year review, for the most part, on equalization—the formula—and the formula has been, I'll say, locked down, I guess, if you will, in—for, really, the next five years. But it's based on two things, again: inflow and outflow of people coming into the province, as well as the federal parameters that make up the whole equalization payment.

Mr. Swan: Today I was asking the Health Minister about a new fund of money which was made available by the federal government in their budget earlier this year: \$150 million in what's called an Emergency Treatment Fund, which is intended to assist communities in dealing with addictions crises, which in Manitoba I think the minister and I would agree is both opioids and methamphetamine.

I'm aware that the minister is not the one negotiating this, but is it fair to say there's nothing in this government's budget that allocates a single dollar to be spent in order to access funds from the Emergency Treatment Fund?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, what I'll do is I'll maybe refer you to—page 79 of the budget talks about mental health and addictions. There's a component (1), (2) and (3), salaries and employee benefits, other expenditures and external agencies.

Subtotals make up for salaries and budgets pretty steady, about—just over \$1,092,000. Similar to recent years. Same thing with—in fact, other expenditures are exactly the same, at 10.999—as well as external agencies, at 228 equally. So the money, from one year to another, is very similar. In fact, last year—in '17-18—we were going to be spending 12.279. And the Estimates of expenditure for '18-19, for instance, are twelve, three, one, seven.

Mr. Swan: Okay, so I take it even as we're having both an opioid crisis and a meth crisis, the total amount of money being invested by the government, as the minister has indicated, is not going up. And, in fact, it's even going down.

I just want to make it clear that there's no money that's set aside for participation in the Emergency Treatment Fund that was announced by the federal government in their budget early this calendar year. Is that correct?

* (15:30)

Mr. Fielding: Yes, I'm going to refer the member to page 34 of the supplementary information for legislative review, and it is on page 34. It talks about the Canada Health Transfer; and so, as you can see, it reviews the estimates of revenues; and you can see, from 2017-18 it went from 1.355400; and it went up this year in '18-19 to 1,441,100.

So what happens is the federal government could have done one of two things, and the way it structurally happens is it flows through the health transfer. They signed a bilateral agreement on the mental health and other monies that were associated with it, but technically the way it—the way the money flows is actually through the health transfer.

So, again, they could have just increased the amount of health transfer dollars. Probably, they want to make a bit more of a splash and so they signed the bilateral agreement, but, technically, the way the money flows is through that, as you can see that there is an increase in that from '17-18.

Mr. Swan: Okay, I'll come back to the bilateral agreement in a minute, but what I'm talking about is something entirely different from the Canada Health

Transfer and entirely different from what I think we called the Health Accord.

I'm talking about an Emergency Treatment Fund that the federal government announced in their 2018 budget early in the year, and in that budget they said they would be putting out there \$150 million that could be accessed by provinces. A province would be entitled to receive \$250,000 from that fund each year and then cost share any other initiatives with the federal government to take on addictions issues of considerable importance within that province.

I'm just asking the minister to confirm that there is no money set aside for participation by the Province in the Emergency Treatment Fund.

Mr. Fielding: Sure, yes. I guess what I'd refer is it—you know, technically, first of all, it's a good question. But this is about BITSA, right, and so that is more of a budget question as opposed to a BITSA question. But I will entail to take it right under advisement right now. We, hopefully, can get you the exact answer for you back, but to be fair this is about BITSA and not necessarily a budget question. But we will, again, speak to the Health Department because I want to make sure that we're giving you the right information. Can probably either get that to you later on today or potentially the next day—the next time we meet.

Mr. Swan: I appreciate the minister's undertaking to do so, and I thank his staff for helping out with that and getting us an answer on a timely basis. That's very helpful.

I do want to return to something that the minister had said about the Canada Health Transfer and the health-care accord. In the spring I'd asked the former minister of Health about the additional money that Manitoba could expect to receive under that accord, and the total came to about \$400 million over 10 years, in fact, \$399.6 million over 10 years. The minister and I don't have to agree—in fact, we might agree on the sufficiency of that amount of money, but I just want to talk what—how that's being received.

The minister in the spring said he expected that it would be paid roughly one tenth every year. There might be a small escalator over the next few years, but he anticipated receiving close to \$40 million additional dollars by reason of that accord. Is that still the case today, late in October 2018?

Mr. Fielding: I'm going to refer you back again to—although I will give direct answers to your question—the health transfer—health—sorry, Canada Health transfers. As mentioned, this is on page 34 of the information—the legislative review supplementary information. And what it does identify, and I mentioned this before, went from 1.355 four hundred up in this year to about 1,441,100—roughly about \$86 million more from the federal government. And, again, that takes into consideration the health transfers of that 86-some-odd million. It's, you know, and change—it's not the exact number, but pretty darn close. Thirty-one million dollars has flowed from the federal government.

Mr. Swan: Okay, I thank the minister for that.

So with—and the increase in the Canada Health Transfer, then, can be broken down a couple of ways. Some of it is an adjustment for Manitoba's growing population. Some of it is a fairly modest year-over-year increase provided by the federal government and a chunk of this now is because of this new health-care accord. And we know that's roughly \$40 million.

What kind of reporting does Manitoba have to provide to the Government of Canada pursuant to this new health-care accord?

Mr. Fielding: The terms of the reporting is incorporated in the agreement that was signed with the federal government.

Mr. Swan: As I understand it, the additional money is meant to cover investments in long-term care, in home care, in addictions and in mental health. And when I review the Health budget, as the minister has already pointed out, there is nothing new, no additional money for addictions. There is virtually nothing for any of mental health, home care, long-term care. I believe it's only about a million dollars you can actually point to in the budget.

Where in the budget can we see that additional \$40 million being invested in health care in Manitoba?

Mr. Fielding: Sorry, could you repeat the question one more time? Sorry.

Mr. Swan: I'd be happy to.

The \$40 million—and again, it can be a little bit more, a little bit less than that this year we accept—roughly \$40 million was earmarked by the federal government for long-term care, for home care, for treatment of addictions and for treatment of mental

health issues. I've been through the budget and I can only find about a million dollars in any of these four areas in additional spending this year.

The minister has said that his government has to report to the federal government. Can he tell us now, where is the rest of this \$40 million actually going into our health-care system?

* (15:40)

Mr. Fielding: Well—and I just want to clarify, obviously the \$40 million so far identified, the amount of money that we have received, the federal government in '18-19 has chosen to flow it through the health transfers. So that's unallocated—or there's not, I don't want to say reporting requirements—but a part of that, through the health transfers, there isn't a reporting requirement on that initial dollars.

So that may be something that federal government has criteria on in years future, but the way they have chosen to flow the money to the provinces, there isn't a health—there isn't a reporting mechanism because it's unallocated—or what's the word for it—there's no strings attached to those flows.

Mr. Swan: Well, it's \$40 million in additional health-care funding that's being received with no strings attached. Can the minister, then, show me where it's actually being invested for health care in Manitoba?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, I'm going to refer the member to the summary budget document here, in page 2, and so if you look under the expenditures under Health, as you can see, the 2017-18 budget was six, six, six million—six billion, six hundred and eighty-one million, and as you can see, the 2018-19 budget was 6751, so that equates to close to \$70 million of additional health-care spending.

So I would point—the monies that is received from the federal government is in—made up of—incorporated in that \$70 million.

Mr. Swan: I'm actually looking at the Estimates of expenditure and revenue. I'm looking at page 70 which contains the appropriations for Health, Seniors and Active Living, and that actually shows two parts. There's part A which is the operating, part B of capital investment, which we can add together.

The operating and capital investment is actually just a little over \$6.1 billion for the previous year, and the estimates for this year are really close to about \$6.17 billion. I'm—am I looking at the wrong

thing, or can the minister give me some other direction to understand the Health budget?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, what I would infer is that's the difference between core and summary. So summary is more an accurate number because it also takes into consideration revenue, right? So if you're outside of core government in terms of the budget reporting there is additional revenues and additional expenses that are associated.

So we have moved to summary, as what the Auditor General has indicated. So the number on page 2 is the real number of what money is being spent. As you can appreciate, there's things that do fall out of this—out of the core budget. A good example may be personal-care homes and that sorts of 'steff', where you can imagine there is some revenues and costs that are associated.

So the number that I referred to on page 2 is probably the most appropriate number to look at in terms of costs and expenditures through the health-care system.

Mr. Swan: Okay, so just to summarize it, we've talked about the 40 million additional dollars coming from the federal government. The minister has confirmed there's no strings attached. And I've asked where that would be reflected in an increase in long-term care, in home care and addictions or mental health, and the minister hasn't pointed me to anything in particular.

Can the minister give me any other guidance on where exactly this additional money from the federal government has gone?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, well, I guess I would identify again, on page 2, the revenues have gone up from the federal government, as identified. We have not seen all of the money. There's a commitment, as you mentioned, somewhere in the realm of about \$40 million a year. We haven't identified all that money or haven't received all that money from the federal government, and they are flowing through the health transfers.

We, of course, would like to get that as soon as we can from our government level. And there is continued spending within the health window.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for the answer.

Today, from a freedom of information request, we've learned that this government has directed another \$36 million in cuts, in-year, for the Winnipeg regional health authority. Despite the fact

that it was from—it was a freedom of information request provided by this government—the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and some members of the government didn't seem to understand where that was coming from.

Can the minister please confirm that, indeed, there is a \$36-million, in-year cut that's being handed to the Winnipeg regional health authority?

Mr. Fielding: Okay, I haven't seen the freedom of information request. And the answer to that can be provided. But I can point to page 2 of the summary budget that does reflect that there is close to \$70 million, budget to budget, that is being additionally appropriated towards the—Health.

Mr. Swan: That's correct. But, if there's cuts that are ordered in-year, that would change that number at the end of the year when there's reporting.

The fact that there's a higher number printed in the budget doesn't mean that's the amount this government is actually going to authorize to spend. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I'd say on a budgeting level, you can't just say when we're three, four or five months into the year that that's where health-care expenditures are going to be.

So, for instance, as a government, we came in about \$166 million below our budgeted amount. There is also money that flows at different times. So we—you know, as a government overall, we brought in about \$94 million in additional revenues. And, as mentioned, the third element to that is that we don't always control when the federal government flows money to us. As mentioned, we haven't received all that \$40 million that the federal government earmarked for things like addictions, things like home care and other things like that.

* (15:50)

So I would say there's a—moving parts and, really, you know, if I was to guess right now of where the budget's going to end, you know, that could end poorly. There could be some sort of a tragic outbreak; there could be a flu epidemic; there could be a whole number of things that happen in the health-care system, so for me to predict where it's going to end—so, really, what I can do to give you the best budgeting forecast, really, would be to point to the budget documents we laid out, and clearly there is close to \$70 million for additional appropriation for Health for this year. And we're hoping that we're

able to manage the health-care system effectively and as—if we can spend money and get results, and if you're able to save a bit more money, then that's money that you can invest in other key priority areas.

Mr. Swan: All right. So let's work this a different way. If the minister ultimately finds out that the freedom of information request answer is wrong and it's anything other than a \$36-million cut in-year to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, will the minister undertake to let me know?

Mr. Fielding: Well, it's hard to answer hypothetical questions. I can tell you, from a budgeting process, we are appropriating about \$70 million more. There is—sometimes there's opportunities the way Ottawa flows money. And so, again, we haven't received all the \$40 million from them. If there's a decision on timing of flow of money and we're looking at opportunities, I think governments as a whole will always look to make investments where it's needed.

But, again, I can't tell you, you know, the—in terms of exactly what the freedom of information request said because I wasn't a part of that, and I think you may have tabled in the House, but I certainly didn't see it. So the most appropriate way I can judge this is just really pointing you back to the budget—the budget document where there is about \$70 million additional Health dollars being flowed.

Mr. Swan: Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, this is not a hypothetical. I'm asking a specific question. I've asked the minister to confirm that there's a \$36-million cut that's being foisted on the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, which has been shown by documents that the minister's government has provided. I'm actually being fair to the minister and inviting him to let me know if, in fact, that number is incorrect. If the minister wants to take me up on that offer, I'll await his word. If he doesn't want to show how his government's numbers are incorrect, then I'll—I guess there's nothing we can do about that.

How much of a cut in-year is being now ordered from the northern regional health authority?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I didn't hear the whole question. I'll make sure I got my earpiece in here. But, you know, I do—you know, maybe this is to you, Mr. Chair. There is a bit of a difference between BITSA and the budget. You know, these are budget—I don't have a problem answering them because our government is open and transparent. But to be fair, we are here and we did appropriate nine hours for BITSA related items. The budget is a time that we

go through the Estimates process to have those discussions.

And, again, I mean, I'm willing to give a bit of latitude, but, you know, maybe I'll refer to you, Mr. Chair, to see if that is a relevant topic.

You know, again, we are talking about BITSA as opposed to a budget item. So maybe I'll refer to you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: On that—we should be focusing on the BITSA bill and Bill 34 and focus on that and appropriate questions for that, so I agree with the minister.

And also, at the same time, I—it's starting to get loud in here. I'm seeing a lot of conversations so it's hard to—the—this—the minister and the critic to hear each other, so if everybody can just quiet down a bit or go to the loge and talk. Thank you.

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, I will ask some more questions about the budget implementation and tax statutes act. The question is how much of an in-year cut is the—is Treasury Board for the Department of Health now requesting from the northern regional health authority?

Mr. Fielding: I just—in the essence of making sure that all the appropriate and right information is put on the record, I just do want to add something to the record, that the WRHA's spending went up 2 per cent this year, \$45.5 million this year. That's according to numbers from our Health Department.

Mr. Swan: Okay, could the minister answer my question about cuts imposed on the northern regional health authority?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, well, I know—obviously, the Estimates process is time for those specific types of questions but with that, I do want to be open and transparent.

So I will point you to page 79. And this is, of course, of our budget, Estimates of expenditures and revenues. So if you look at the subsection—and there is a section that talks about Health Services Insurance Fund, funding to the authorities, and there's a number of items that I won't go through about queued and long-term. But if you look at the subtotals, which is just before part B, it actually has increased by about \$7 million.

So it goes last year, for instance, in 2017-18, from \$3,887,474,000 to three billion, eight hundred and ninety-three billion, seven hundred and

fifty-seven. So that actually points to about a \$7-million increase to the health authorities.

Mr. Swan: Well, sure. I'm glad the minister has seen page 79 because it demonstrates that there is actually increase of only about \$200,000 in acute care services. There is actually a decrease of more than \$2 million in long-term-care services. There's only about a \$1-million increase in home-care services. There's no increase in spending for community and mental health services and, in fact, almost all of the increase comes for emergency response and transport services.

So if the minister was trying to provide that answer in response to my earlier question, I'll pose the question again. If the minister, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), is receiving an additional \$40 million from the federal government to cover long-term care, home-care services, mental health and addictions, where on page 79 of the Estimates book is any of that \$40 million being invested?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I can say overall our government has increased expenditures close to \$70 million in the health-care field. What I can say is that we are seeing very good results. We're seeing things like ER wait times going down by close to 25 per cent, things like MRI wait times going down by about 30 per cent. We're seeing an increase in things—the amount of doctors that are coming to Manitoba have increased by about 75—75 additional doctors. As well as things, like the time it takes to—or, the amount of patients that have to be transferred from one hospital to another hospital has actually gone down. There's about 1,000 patients that had to—haven't had to have this transfer.

So I guess my overarching, you know, comment would be that there is more money that is being appropriated for the health-care field, and depending on how you look at it—I know in our budget consultations I've talked to close to, I think, \$386 million additional money, from the day we took over office until all our public accounts—the money we had spent. If you look at budget over budget, it's in the 'rane' of 600 to 700 million dollars more.

* (16:00)

So we have been making a lot more investments in the health-care field and we are getting some good results, I would say, from—for Manitobans. And again, there's about \$70 million additionally appropriated for the health-care field.

To the member's point about the health transfers, as mentioned, the health transfers have gone up and we haven't seen all the money flow from Ottawa in terms of those particular areas and it is wrapped up in the health transfers that the federal government flows to the provinces to support health care, social services and things like equalization payments.

Mr. Swan: I'd asked a couple of times now about the—whether there is a further in-year funding cut that's being handed to the northern regional health authority. Is the minister prepared to answer that question, or do we have to wait for the freedom of information request and ask about each of the health authorities separately?

Mr. Fielding: Well, maybe I'll just refer back to my old—just my previous answer about the money that is being flowed to the authorities. So, clearly, there is \$7 million additional appropriation that is being flowed to the health authorities to address health-care needs.

You know, I know this question was debated quite a—but—discussed a lot at the Estimates process that we went through in the last—I guess, earlier in June, probably in May, that identified all the specific details. But I can tell you a part of our budget documents that over \$7 million is being invested in the health authorities as opposed to previous years.

Mr. Swan: All right. So the minister's refusing to provide that information, so we will just have to continue to get it through the freedom of information process and continue to put on the record the cuts that this government is making to the various health-care authorities, and I guess we'll take it from there.

I presume that the minister in his role with Treasury Board is quite involved in the establishment of Shared Health. Is there any additional allocation under the budget for Shared Health this fiscal year?

Mr. Fielding: Well, maybe what I'll do is I'll read this, as it relates to BITSA and what is in BITSA. So there, obviously, is a discussion about the health premium. So the purpose of—with the amendments here, we're talking about the health authorities that expected that a number of bargaining units with collective agreements in the health sector will be reduced from more than 183 to less than 40. One hundred and eighty-three bargaining units in Manitoba is more than the total bargaining units in all western provinces. These changes will have a positive effect on patients who far too long had to

endure a health, really, system that has been an outlier in Canada, with labour contracts operating under different rules, created unfair situations or employees doing similar jobs in different areas.

In terms of the BITSA amendment, which I think the member's getting at, as it relates to BITSA, the member—the amendments were—we are making in BITSA will really enable the creation of our province-wide employees' organization for the purpose of collective bargaining called Shared Health, right. Other employers providing province-wide health services may be designated, such as CancerCare. There is no termination of employees involved in the creation of the Shared Health employees' organization and the health sector bargaining unit, which is, of course, Bill 29, act—review act. The way it currently only has two provincial-wide health employers—Diagnostic Services Manitoba, health—CancerCare Manitoba—but does not enable a province-wide employer organization to be created for the purpose of collective agreement.

So that, really, what is in BITSA—that really talks about the health changes that are being made. It's really done to ensure that there's one employer, I guess, I would say, from Shared Health Services. And so the questions, as it relates—maybe I'll refer you a little bit higher level, but we have increased the Health budget by upwards of \$70 million, from budget to budget, and we think that we're getting some good results with it.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, before we continue with the questioning here, I just want to—making sure—again, I just want to remind people it's getting a little loud here to hear the minister, so—and the critic. So, if you can just quiet it down, and we'll continue.

The honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

Mr. Swan: Thank you Mr. Deputy—or Mr. Chairperson. The minister was speaking about the changes that will happen to labour relations in Manitoba under Shared Health.

Could the minister, then, just put on the record what he thinks is the benefit of the change he just put on the record?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I would say that, if you look at Manitoba versus other provinces, there are substantially more bargaining units that are a part of our health-care system. Right now, the number of bargaining units and collective agreements in the health-care sector really is about 183. And so we'd

like to see that as reduced to about 40. One hundred and eighty-three bargaining units in Manitoba is more than the total number of bargaining units in all of western Canada. So, if you're asking me the question, I would say that we'd be able to invest more money in areas that are needed with individuals that need the essential services. If you spend all this time bargaining of 183 different units as opposed to 40, I would say there's efficiencies that can be created, and you can use the money that you potentially could save to invest in essential services for Manitobans.

Mr. Swan: Can the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) explain what efficiencies he thinks can be adopted by the change that his government's proposing?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I would say, just globally, that if you have over 183 units and bargaining units that you're negotiating on, there is a lot of time, energy and manpower or womanpower—'preople' power, just to 'blee'—put it in perspective—that go to negotiating some of these agreements.

We have put forth—we feel is an appropriate legislation, through Bill 29, that identifies how these things—how agreements—collective agreements are negotiated and, I think, just logically, if you look at the fact that instead of having over 183 different bargaining units, you have 40, that'd be less time and energy that people need to take on the bargaining unit when there is a consolidation of that to 40, and you're able to use some of the time and energy resources towards really helping Manitobans as opposed to just the bargaining process.

* (16:10)

That being said, we do believe it is fair. Bill 29 identified a commissioner—I'm going to forget the commissioner's name right now, but that individual will be working with both labour as well as management in terms of the appropriate piece. I believe Rob Pruden is his name, and I believe he'll be reporting back as it relates to that legislation later on this fall that will identify a fair process.

I know there is consultations that's happening with both labour and management, and we think that's an appropriate stage. But, you know, again, just to clearly answer your question, we think if you're spending all this time with 183 units, if you can only do that with 40 units, it's going to be a more efficient effect, not only for the employees, but, more importantly, for the patients, the health-care system,

and that will allow us to invest monies where people really need it, you know, in essential services.

Mr. Swan: If I understand the minister's position, the efficiencies, or the savings, the government's going to receive is not having to negotiate as many agreements. Is that the minister's—is that the summary of the minister's argument?

Mr. Fielding: I'd say when you have over 183 units, and that's more than all the other western provinces combined, that, clearly, you know, we have too many bargaining units that are in play right now, and I think that Bill 29 will work with labour; it will work with employees and it will allow for better—a better, efficient health-care system.

Again, I just want to re-emphasize, the 183 bargaining units that we currently have represents more than anyone in western Canada. Manitoba is about 1.3 million people in our province. You have—the western provinces have much more in the amount of people that we have, and when you have that amount of bargaining units, you think you can be a little be more efficient. And so we think that there is efficiencies and money should be really spent appropriately, and so we think that we're able to utilize some of those—some of the savings to really provide better services for Manitobans. We need to stretch the health-care dollars a little bit further.

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, I just—I want to be fair to the minister because the only thing I've heard is there's going to be efficiencies from having to negotiate with fewer bargaining units, and I just want to be fair to the minister.

Is that the sum total of the benefit that he thinks is going to be derived from moving ahead with Shared Health and one province-wide health employer?

Mr. Fielding: Well, you know, again, there's going to clearly be a difference of opinion on here. We think it'll be more efficient and effective as an organization. When you have over 183 units, more than all the western provinces combined, we don't think that's as efficient use of our health-care dollars as can be. And so, any time we can be more efficient and effective, this government's going to take those steps, and that's part of Bill 29.

We think it's an appropriate step that can allow us to spend more efficiently and effectively, and really what that means, more importantly, is, you know, we can streamline and we can spend health-care dollars in a more appropriate fashion. We think that if you're

able to spend as much money as you can on patient care that that's the appropriate use of taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Swan: I'm interested to pursue a little bit about what the minister sees as efficiencies. Since the government passed its bill to take away fair and free collective bargaining in Manitoba by imposing wage freezes, how many agreements has the government actually struck with public sector unions?

Mr. Fielding: I could take that under advisement and get back to you with the exact numbers, but what I can say is our overarching goal as government is to be as efficient, as effective as we can as an organization, and we want to do it in a fair process. We think that's the process that we try to take as government overall. In fact, even with some of the changes we made on the workforce, the vast majority of people that have seen any changes in the workforce are people that are retiring or people that are moving on. I think it's upwards of 73 per cent of people that have changed their roles, you know, are associated with these types of items.

So we think that we can be as efficient, as effective as we can and we think we owe it to taxpayers and people that are accessing the health-care system. We know what the results were in the past. We don't want to make those mistakes, and so, if we can identify monies that can go directly towards patient care, that's going to be something that's going to mean important progress for Manitobans. And so far we've actually seen some pretty good progress. You're seeing about a 25 per cent reduction in our wait times for things like ERs.

We've made important investments, though, I can tell you, just from the Grace Hospital alone. It's in my backyard, if you will, as a constituency, and we've made a \$43-million investment in things like the Grace Hospital. We've made important investments in Selkirk. I know if the member from Selkirk is—been a big supporter of investing in Selkirk hospital.

So we've made those important investments, and we're going to continue to do that. And we're seeing some, again, some good results with ER wait times, things like MRI reductions, the amount of doctors that are coming to the province, and more people that are not having to transfer to secondary—and you can imagine someone that's in the health-care system, they're having to transfer to other hospitals and stuff. That's not a good process.

So we think that we've been able to manage the health-care system in a more efficient and effective way, while making important investments like the 180—or \$386-million investment that we've had since coming to office.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for undertaking to let us know how many collective agreements with public sector unions have actually been reached since the bill to suspend fair collective bargaining was passed. I don't expect it'll take the minister very long to come up with that number, because the number is actually very, very low. So we will be interested to see, with that kind of efficiency, how the new regime is going to work.

So, with respect to Shared Health, then, we have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who some days talks about workers having—should have the choice.

Does the minister agree that taking away the choice of various unions and forcing a series of votes isn't actually doing anything to make the health-care system more efficient?

Mr. Fielding: I think I can speak, probably, on behalf of the Premier and most of our government that our focus is really on patient care. We want to make sure that patients are getting outcomes they deserve. We know that in the past, we haven't seen those results that are there, so our focus with the health-care system, No. 1, is to make smart investments.

And some decisions, you know, when we first started with our transformation initiatives in health care, there were some concerns in the community, but I think we are seeing that we're turning the corner here. We're seeing a reduction in things like wait times by upwards of 25 per cent, MRIs, things like more doctors.

So we are seeing some important investments, and from our government's point of view, I would say that our focus with the health-care system is to provide as—a streamlined system, a system that is effective for patients, and more patients are going to see better outcomes.

Mr. Swan: Thank the minister for the undertakings that he's given today, and we look forward receiving those answers. I do want to thank staff for being here and managing that. It's appreciated.

I'm going to hand this over to my colleague from Flin Flon for some more questions.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I thank the member from Minto for affording me the opportunity to ask a couple of questions.

Let's talk about infrastructure spending. Now, I understand that the amount of money being spent on infrastructure—and by infrastructure, I don't mean building schools, like this government quite often likes to include in their infrastructure; invisible schools, nonetheless.

I want to talk about some roads, particularly some roads in the North. I know the community of Snow Lake has some grave concerns with the conditions of Highway 392. This is the road that leads from the main road into the community of Snow Lake. There was supposed to be some construction money on that road in the last couple of years, which has not happened.

Can the minister update me, and them, on what the plans are for Highway 392 in the next construction season?

Mr. Fielding: Well, you know, maybe I'll put a few comments on the record. And, again, I want to make sure that, you know, from a—maybe this is to you, Mr. Chair. I mean, we are here talking about BITSA, and I—so I will get in some of the infrastructure spending that's there, but, to be fair, we're not talking about the budget document.

There was times appropriated, and, again, I'll try and answer some of your questions. But, to be fair, that's what the Estimates process is all about, right. There's over 100 hours of Estimates to ask those specific questions. BITSA really talks about the budget implementation bill in a whole bunch of different areas.

* (16:20)

So I can globally say to you that we have committed over \$1 billion of infrastructure spending and, you know, I know the member has talked—you know, I don't want to take his words out of context, but to somehow suggest that, you know, spending money on schools is not important investment—you know, I think, probably most people on this side of the House would take exception to that. You know, we have made investments of close to seven new schools in these certain areas—in a variety of areas, not just in Winnipeg but throughout Manitoba. I know there's one in Brandon. I know the member from Brandon West is here and probably can tell you of all the great benefits investing in schools in Brandon. I know the member—a variety of other

members are here. The member from Kildonan is here and there's been some important investments. I know the former minister is here and made important investments in seven new schools. So we think that is important investment. So I take a little bit of exception to the fact that this isn't important investments.

That being said, again, we committed to over \$1 billion in spending. We have made important investments, not just infrastructure spending, but in schools—getting a bit of feedback here on the mic—and we'll continue to do that as a government as we go forward.

What I would like to also put on the record is we've really tried to spend money in a little bit wiser way. I'll give you some examples for that. In fact, with our—the way we're spending our money, we put a value-for-money tool in place, of return on investment, to really identify the important schools—or, not just important schools, important infrastructure projects, to make sure there's value for money for taxpayers. Now, we're going to be more efficient with our infrastructure dollars. We think that's really important; if you're going to spend the money, you spend it in a better way.

We're also doing a transformational capital types of projects. And that's making investments early, and investments that are going to pay fruit later on down the line. In fact, we invested close to about \$20 million in some of the transformational capital projects. And what we believe is that we will save, actually, upwards of about \$191 million in the long term. And that's money that you can invest in things like infrastructure or health or other things like that.

We've also done things like smarting—shopping smarter. We think that Manitobans are smart shoppers and they expect us to do that. And we've—we're also making substantial investments—or, getting substantial investments in private sector capital, where we've seen over \$1 billion of private sector capital investment in the province.

So I would say a mixture of our commitments—our infrastructure commitments, spending the money smarter as well as making important investments—getting important investments from things like private sector investments, like Roquette and Simplot and things like HyLife Foods are all bringing Manitoba to the forefront. In fact, we're—of all the provinces, we've got the highest number—in fact, we're leading the nation in terms of private sector capital investment.

So I would say those are important investments. On the one specific project, I can get some information back to you on that. We have made infrastructure a priority for this government, and that's really what we anticipate going forward.

So I'm not sure if that relates to the BITSA document, or the budget that we have—had about 100 hours of Estimates review.

Mr. Chairperson: I just wanted to conclude with the—what the minister has said that we would have to focus on Bill 34, which is the BITSA bill. And like I said—like the minister said, there was many a time for Estimates for these questions.

So I'll put the question back to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

Mr. Lindsey: I guess my first comment is the minister said he didn't want to take my comments out of context, but he certainly did a pretty good job of doing exactly that. Certainly, at no point in my question did I ever suggest that spending on schools was not important. Traditionally, that's not been captured in the Infrastructure budget, so that's where my comment came from.

So, speaking specifically about the budget implementation bill, how is money been allocated for infrastructure spending, in the North particularly?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I mean, as it relates to BITSA, I would suggest that, you know, we want to make investments where it does make sense, where there's a return on investment, where there's a priority. And return on investment also wants to take into consideration local needs and wants. And so, you know, I guess maybe what I will do, even though this is outside of BITSA is, you know, we've had an opportunity to go to different communities and have some budget consultations. I know we've had the big debate on whether I was or wasn't in Flin Flon, so I just want to say that I was in Flin Flon again and, you know, we had some good meetings with Cal Huntley, who's the mayor of Flin Flon. I believe he did get re-elected.

We had Glenda Daschuk, which is the CAO of Flin Flon. We had some city councillors, in the chair of Finance, Colleen McKee. Tom Therson [*phonetic*], which is the community futures—I'm probably making some 'pronunciations' wrong in this.

We've also had individuals from Hudson Bay minerals, the director of Health and Safety and

Aboriginal and External Affairs, Mr. Richard Trudeau. Karen Mackinnon, who's the Chamber of Commerce president and councillor for Flin Flon. I hope she did get re-elected. She did seem very enthused and engaged in the community aspects when I was there.

We also had a lot of people from Thompson there. We had people like a principal of the local school, the Mary Duncan School, division school board; we had things like the, you know, local business owners in the northern sector councils that were part of our consultation.

And my long-winded approach to this is saying that's really what the budget consultation sessions are about, and I can tell you we have heard from a number of local communities.

Part of the budget session we also had an opportunity on Thursday to have a session here at the Manitoba Legislature. It was fully accessible. I know the member from Brandon West was there and helped us get through the process as well as the member from St. Norbert was also helping us chair. He did a great job—great job again, in chairing that.

And so those are items that we hear from residents of where we should make those investments, so that's not specifically related to BITSA, which the question is, but that's, I guess, the thought process of how we make the decisions from a budgetary process, through the Estimates process, No. 1, that reviews the documents and, as we go forward, forming the budget. We take consultations from Manitobans to help make decisions.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we continue, I just wanted to read this. While I appreciate the budget implementation and tax statute amendment act touches on many aspects of the provincial budget, it does not touch on every aspect of the budget.

The bill is involved with implementing measures that the budget makes various amendments to tax legislation and that such questions should be addressed on those implementation measures or changes to the tax legislation.

Accordingly, I would like to appreciate the members could direct their questions to the clause of Bill 34. I recognize that certain tangents may flow through the discussions of the bill into other areas, but if the members may stay—stain from—strain from specific contents of this bill, I would appreciate that they could connect those tangents to the clause of the bill.

I thank the members for their co-operation in this debate.

Mr. Lindsey: Thank you for clarifying that, Mr. Chairperson, and certainly I'm pretty sure that infrastructure spending and how it's going to be carried out becomes a part of how the budget gets implemented, so my questions are specifically about the implementation process for some of that budgetary process in the North.

The minister did spend a fair bit of time talking about his budget consultation meeting that he held in Flin Flon, and he led off a—read off a list of names of his special invited guests that came out to share their opinion.

It's very unfortunate that the minister failed to make his presence publicly known ahead time in Flin Flon so that average citizens that weren't on the special invited list could come out and perhaps share some of their views, too.

So, certainly, I don't have any ill will towards any of the city councillors in Flin Flon, and they do a pretty good job of representing the city of Flin Flon's interests when it comes to those kind of things. But, certainly, there are other people and groups within the community that probably would have been quite happy to come out and share some of their views, you know, some of the things like the food bank, the women's resource centre—some of those community groups that really understand the nuts and bolts of where cuts that this government is bringing in affect people the hardest and the most severe.

*(16:30)

So sticking strictly, I guess, to the budget implementation bill, there—we know that there's cuts in the infrastructure spending. We've seen that, and it particularly hits hard in the North. We've seen cuts in the northern health and we're, I'm sure, going to see more cuts in that area.

So is there anything in the budget implementation bill that talks about infrastructure spending specific to anything in northern Manitoba?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I would mention a couple of others, too, and I'm not going to, you know, read everyone's names on the record, but, you know, there is a lot of people that did come to the session in Flin Flon and—Flin Flon as well as The Pas.

We had the general manager from Flin Flon Credit Union, Mr.—Mrs.—I'm not sure if it's Mr. or Mrs. Kory Eastman that was there. We had the past chair of the Chamber of Commerce, original board member of Look North, Dianne Russell. We also had individuals like business owners Treasure and Ryan Daneliuk—I think that could be the Daneliuk family that could be in Winnipeg as well—but they're business owners; they own reliable services—Sal's gym and a variety other owners. Dave Kendall, owner of accounting firms Kendall Wall, which is a accounting firm up in Flin Flon, as well as the secretary-treasurer to Flin Flon School Division, Heather Fleming. And we also had Constance McLeese, I believe her name is, superintendent of the Flin Flon School Division.

And we also had individuals from The Pas, so you had people that actually came from The Pas. I think it's about—you—the member knows, probably about an hour, hour and 10 minutes drive. I used to—in another life, I used to go up there every six weeks or so, and we used to fly into Flin Flon and drive down to The Pas and fly out of there, but anyway. There's business owners Dion Bird at Collins Barrow, who's a lawyer from The Pas. We also had the president of UCN, board member Doug Lauvstad—saying his name wrong. You had Tara [*phonetic*], again, principal. You had Jim Berscheid, who is a meats—it's the chamber president, but owns a meat company out in The Pas. You had the northern sector council, like, I said again, Jamie Grant. You had Elaine Kobelka, and that's a certified general accountant, so you had some more business owners that were there. You had Don Dunnigan, who's the board chair of the Destination Marketing Committee as well as part of the Rotary Club. And you had Carrie Atkinson, who's the co-owner of the Northern Building Supply in The Pas, vice-president of The Pas Chamber of Commerce, vice-chair of the northern regional health authority.

So, to be fair, we did have a pretty good cross-section of people that made it out to the event. I know the member wasn't able to make it, but we did have a good session.

I can tell you that we also put out—just last week, we talked about prebudget consultations are under way. The Province launched an interactive citizens budget, and so this is a kind of a new and innovative way, whether people from Flin Flon or The Pas or other areas, that they can interact with our budget and they're able to kind of see where we can make

investments and what that would mean through the whole budget process. So we think that's important.

There's also an opportunity for people to make written submissions, as well as an opportunity for people to do the online survey, which we think is important, about forming a budget in the province of Manitoba.

And so—and the one final point is this, for the member: I did commit, if you would like, is we could go on the—I could go on the radio station in Flin Flon and promote what people are saying in terms of the budget process, where we should make investments. Love to do that, and we're committed to, you know, letting—getting information from Manitobans as much as we can.

I think last year we got upwards of 32,000 individuals that participated in the budget process, and so, when you do have that amount of people that contribute to a budget process, it is a fairly well-rounded amount of people that could go there. So I think that all—answer kind of correlates with listening to Manitobans, and that's really what this is about, through our budget process.

And again, the budget implementation bill is a little bit different from that budget process, but I just wanted to address that, put that all out on the record because there has been some good work being done, but it is October and we don't anticipate a budget coming out until February or March.

So we're going to listen to Manitobans more and more and more, and that will help formulate the decisions making the budget, whether it's decisions on infrastructure in the North, in the south, or health or education, all these items are important to us as we go forward with making a budget.

Mr. Lindsey: Gosh, what to say? The minister has led off—or read off a list of business leaders in the community of Flin Flon that attended his secret budget meeting. Unfortunately, what's missing from any of that is any of the community groups that are concerned with poverty, any of the community groups that are concerned with workers, workers' rights. So I'm not sure just how the guest list was derived for this meeting that was not announced in Flin Flon. But I guess we know exactly from the minister's rather lengthy dissertation and his list of names, we know exactly who he's listening to and who he's not listening to, as he proceeds in developing his budget documents.

Would those few comments, I will turn the floor over to my friend from Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm pleased to be able to—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry. The minister wants to respond to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), if that's okay with you? [*interjection*]

The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding).

Mr. Fielding: To be fair, through our budget process, we had presentations from the Canadian Federation of Labour that came out, Mr. Kevin Rebeck came out. We had—that was in the south, and, although the member from the south—Southdale was there—[*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —he did a great job sharing it for us and did a fabulous, fabulous job. We also had MGEU that made a presentation on Thursday. We also had a number of agencies from social service agencies, Ms. Molly—I'm probably saying her name wrong—Molly, I think it's McCracken, if I'm not mistaken. I had some dealings with her and social services, and we had a lot of child-care centres that came out and made presentations. In fact, the—or the Child Care Association of Manitoba came out and made presentations. A lot of social service agencies that deal with CLDS made presentations.

So, to be fair, you know, we have been hearing from a lot of individuals. There were some private citizens that came out, and a part of every session we not only just had groups that would come out. There was a—even if you didn't want to make a presentation to the committee, there was a free-for-all where people would come and they'd be asking questions, firing questions back and forth to us that were to answer.

So we're going to listen to everyone. I'm sure there's probably some items that we will agree or disagree not just with the labour, but with business, with—you know, sometimes citizens, but you try and—budget is a process where you try and get everyone's opinions on things and you try and make the decisions that you think are in the best interests of Manitobans. So, with that, I'll just—to respond quickly to that, and.

Mr. Allum: Okay, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to be able to participate in these

proceedings this afternoon. I also, like my friend from Minto and my friend from Flin Flon, want to welcome staff into the Chamber this afternoon. And I'm, frankly, very glad they're here, because the minister's really not been able to answer many of the questions we've been asking, and at least he doesn't seem to understand some of the detail involved.

So I'm very glad that staff is here today to be able to provide him with the information so that he can give precise answers to direct questions, and, I have to say, I don't blame him for not wanting to answer questions on the budget. I wouldn't really want to have to defend the budget made by the former member—or the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), the former minister of Finance. I wouldn't want to have to defend that so I'm very, very sympathetic to him wanting to just stay on track this afternoon, as best we can, around BITSA. But, of course, as in all cases, we can't just speak about BITSA without speaking about the budget and so we're going to do it. *[interjection]*

I note that the former minister of Finance, unable to contain his heckling this afternoon, but he had his chance as Finance minister; he didn't too well there, so he's—now he's off to somewhere else.

* (16:40)

I know that we spent a great deal of time on the education property tax rebate the other day and, without wanting to belabour the point, I do want to see if we can get a more precise answer from the minister on that issue, because as we review Hansard, it's pretty clear that one moment he's saying one thing, and then the next moment he's saying another thing. And it's really quite confusing for the rest of us.

Now, as the minister knows, most mobile home owners don't pay education property tax; they pay a special levy. Nonetheless, for years, they were able to apply the Education Property Tax Credit to rebate some or all of the—they were paying, so they were able to get up to \$700 back.

So can the minister make it absolutely clear this afternoon that those mobile home owners will still be able to apply the tax credit to the levy that they are paying?

Mr. Fielding: Well, since the member did bring up the former minister, I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank the former minister of Finance for probably some of the most challenging budgets that any minister of Finance has ever had to

deal with and did just a fabulous job at really fixing the finances, repairing some of the services and rebuilding the economy. He did a fabulous job. I can tell you that there are some tough decisions that need to be made, and so he led the charge. And so we're overjoyed that he's being able to work in the health-care sector, because that's such an important sector for all Manitobans.

And, you know, I'm honoured to serve as the Minister of Finance. I had quite a bit experience, as I vice-chaired our Treasury Board process and was involved in all three of our previous budgets in one way or the other. As well as some previous experience, I think we probably past run against each other when we were both at the City in different types of roles, and so I've got a lot of experience in those areas. So, you know, I think we're trying to make some decisions that are in the best interests of Manitobans.

And just to answer your question quickly, the Education Property Tax Credit, again, is—it's very similar to the other property—or the credit systems, the credits, that are in place right now, where it's done of the education taxes. We know that over 95 per cent of people will not see any changes at all, and I can tell you that renters will benefit from this. All renters will benefit from the elimination of the \$250 deductible, which is—reduces the amount for eligible taxes from \$700.

What I can tell you is, of the 133,000 renters, over 26,000 renters will actually see a decrease, and the others will see no changes at all. But there is benefits that mobile home owners will have because of the 'duction' of the \$250 tax. I did—can go back into the information for you. The vast majority of citizens—of homeowners, whether it be in the—I know the member from Flin Flon had raised Flin Flon, but I'll use it as an example—will continue to see the full benefits of the Education Property Tax Credit as a result of the changes. Moreover, the renters, whether it be in Flin Flon or other areas, will benefit from elimination of this deductible. And, as mentioned, there's a number of residents, mobile home owners and others, that will benefit from this. And so 26,000 of them will actually see a decrease, and so we're happy about that.

We know it's consistent with the other tax credits program, and mobile home owner residents with assessed school taxes or part of the property taxes continue to be—they continue to be eligible under the Education Property Tax Credit. Even a mobile home

owner is not—if they're not assessed for school taxes, residents may also claim the education property taxes on their personal income taxes—returns based on the lot fees they paid out. So this means that a mobile home owner residence will also benefit from the elimination of the \$250 deductible because a lower amount of lot fees are required to receive the \$700 Education Property Tax Credit.

So, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, consistent with other property tax credits, the vast majority of people will see either no change. But that doesn't include people that are renters, where 26,000 renters will actually see a decrease. So that's entirely consistent with all our property tax credit programs that are in place right now.

If I could request maybe just a five-minute recess for—we're going to be here 'til about 6:30 tonight, so just an ability to—

Mr. Chairperson: Is it agreed for the committee to call a five-minute recess? *[Agreed]*

So we'll have a five-minute recess.

The committee recessed at 4:45 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:53 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee will resume, and we'll go back to questioning.

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

I was hoping that the minister might be able to provide us with an absolutely crystal clear answer on the Education Property Tax Credit issue, so I'm going to try and ask it one more time.

It's kind of framing it in one of those yes-or-no circumstances so that we can get some direct clarity, not a lot of all-over-the-place answers, lot of different lines, just a basic yes or no will do.

I'm going to ask it again: Can the minister make it absolutely clear that those mobile home owners will still be able to apply the tax credit to the levy that they are paying? Is that a yes or a no?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I'm going to try and answer it in a yes-and-no nature, but, first I want to bring some context to the actual question here. What I'd like to say is that mobile homes in Manitoba are treated under a special circumstances for property taxation and education property tax credits. Those that are formally assessed from school taxes may make

education property tax claims on their basis; in addition, lot rental fees that are paid to the private owner, whether you're in Flin Flon or other areas of the province, of a mobile home park, by a mobile home residence, may be claimed as rent within the calculation of occupancy costs for the purposes of the Education Property Tax Credit.

I'd like to further add to that yes-and-no answer that prior to 2019, owners of mobile homes that are formally assessed and receive a municipal property tax statement for the mobile home may claim the licence fee as their net property taxes, as well as the rent paid for the lot itself, when calculating occupancy costs for the purpose of education property taxes.

Mobile home owners within the mobile home parks that do not receive municipal property tax statements typically receive a demand for a pro-rated share of the omnibus mobile home park property tax assessment from mobile park owners.

Again, whether you're in Fort Rouge or you're in Kirkfield Park or you're in—wherever you are across the province, prior to 2019, these amounts may have been claimed as taxes for the purpose of education property taxes. So mobile park residents can claim 20 per cent of the residential or retail fees as occupancy costs for the purposes—for the education property taxes.

Prior to 2019, the minimum amount of rent needed to be eligible for the maximum 700 education property taxes was \$4,750. And so I think it's relevant—is the removal of \$250 deductible, effective for the 2019 tax years, would benefit taxpayers, as the amount of rent needed to be eligible for the full \$700 basic credit is reduced to \$3,500 or approximately \$290 per month.

And so the proposed changes within BITSA 2018 removes the eligibility for the amounts that may be considered as equivalent to municipal or school taxes, and limits the eligibility to formal tax—school taxes only. This may affect the eligible of licence fees, but does not affect low—sorry, lot rental fees that may be claimed as rent.

So, for example, in 2018 and prior tax years, a claim of \$1,440 would result in a Education Property Tax Credit of \$40 for the municipal homeowner. In 2019 and later, the same claimant, or the same claim, of \$1,440 now receives \$290 Education Property Tax Credit because of elimination the \$250 deductible. This is the case whether you're in Flin Flon or in

Fort Rouge or Kirkfield Park or other areas of the province.

So I think that clarifies the yes-and-no answer.

Mr. Allum: Well, I'm not sure that it does that at all, Mr. Deputy Chair. And a really disappointing thing about this process right now is that we've been directed to try to ask direct questions about the budget implementation bill.

I asked the minister to provide a very simple yes-or-no answer to a very simple yes-or-no question and, instead, what he did is he read off a two-page political note that only serves to muddy the water, rather than to provide transparency to Manitobans on tax issues related to the BITSA implementation bill.

So I'd take that—the minister's actual answer, actually as a no, since he doesn't seem to understand the issue himself. He may well be putting a tremendous burden on low-income Manitobans, but that wouldn't surprise me at all, because it's been the intent of his government, the former Finance minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to make life harder for low-income Manitobans in every possible way. And so that's just been a standard operating procedure for the government.

So I'll move to a different issue also contained within the BITSA legislation in relation to the Book Publishing Tax Credit.

Can the minister tell us why the government would only renew this credit for one year?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I—you know, to be fair, I want to address the comments that were made, and, respectfully, I tried to answer, and I expanded upon whether you wanted—or yes-or-no answer. I probably answered this question about seven or eight times, at least, and so I have provided a lot of information.

So, to be fair, I mean, you're taking a bit of a political shot at myself, and I did provide, in a respectful way, the information back on the education property taxes. And sometimes what gets frustrating, from my level—and I hear it from the member from Point Douglas all the time—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order.

I just want to make sure that all of the comments come through the Chair, okay.

The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding).

* (17:00)

Mr. Fielding: Somehow, this side of the House, you know, somehow, doesn't care about, you know people that are low-income. And, you know, I can tell you, and—that, you know, we very much do care for low-income individuals and—although sometimes we differ in the approach of how we're look—trying to look after low-income individuals, you know, we think, probably, from a Conservative, Mr. Chair, point of view, that giving a little bit more money in people's pockets, whether that be for, you know, PST cuts or whether that be tax brackets or whether that be things like the basic personal exemption or whether that be things like increasing the Rent Assist program, that we do very much care for individuals.

And so I don't want to leave it on the record that, you know, everyone in this House really don't care about, because we very much do. And I would suggest we care as much as people from the other side of the House, whether you're Liberals or NDPs. And I could guarantee, if I canvass my colleagues in the back here, I bet you the vast majority of them went out and helped out either at Siloam Mission or have—in the last year or two have, you know, helped out at Agape Table, that volunteer, that make charitable contributions.

And so, you know, I'm a little bit offended when I do hear that somehow we don't care about low-income individuals. Maybe we do it in a different way, policy, you know, but, you know, I do get offended when I hear that somehow we don't care about 'lowing' individuals, because we very much do. And we do it in maybe a different policy format from yourself. So if I could just respectfully ask you not to, you know, somehow suggest that we don't care about low-income individuals. And I think, probably, beyond in this Chamber that we're talking about this, if I had a conversation, you know, out in the hall, you probably would agree that, you know, for the most part, we're all trying to help low-income individuals and help people in and itself. And so we're doing it a different policy.

So I had to make that comment on the record, but—so if you want to ask your question again, I'll try and answer that.

Mr. Allum: Well, I don't know quite how to respond to that. How—I'm not sure why the minister would be surprised that in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba someone would be making a political observation. Just for the record, that's what we do here in the House.

And, frankly, whatever his defence of his government's approach to low-income Manitobans really lacks credibility. He wants to call the—putting less people on the tax rolls as some kind of benefit for low-income people. We know, in his own budget documents, that the real benefit comes to high-income earners, starting with the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), every Cabinet minister along the way and then every member of the backbenches on both sides of the Legislature. So he's not kidding anybody when he says that that's an anti-poverty measure.

In last year's BITSA legislation, the former Finance minister buried cuts to transit, broke a historic 50-50 funding agreement with Winnipeg Transit and other transit authorities across the province that had a direct result of increasing fares for Manitobans quite significantly. So if—the minister, I have to say, in trying to offer up an—a defence of his government's empathy for low-income Manitobans actually lacks when it comes to the facts of the situation.

And we can go on, and we can go outside and talk in the hall if he likes. I would tell him the same thing in the hall, on the street, in the coffee shop. It doesn't really matter. He would get the same message from me time and time again.

But the question was around the Book Publishing Tax Credit, which is in the BITSA legislation. We'll see if he knows any more about this one than he did about the last item. But the first question was simply, why was it only renewed for one year?

Mr. Fielding: Well, you know, I—you know, quite frankly, I've got—I've a lot of respect for the member. And, you know, for the most part, I would have thought that I would get better responses than I did regarding that. I tried to tell you, from our point of view, that we very much do care about people in a whole bunch of different ways. And yet we went back to this kind of political back and forth. And so I guess you can say your political points, and I'll say my political points. And I have no concern, no thought that you somehow don't care for poor people, you know, because of a number of policies that you implemented. But, you know, I was hoping for that respect back from you to at least acknowledge the fact that this—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. *[interjection]* Just—yes, okay.

The honourable Minister for Finance.

Mr. Fielding: —side of the House, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that we have a respectful dialogue on this and, at least, maybe have a disagreement amongst policy items to do this, but I'm disappointed to know that we can't.

I know just reading—just online here, I—looking at Jack Layton's last words: love is better than anger and hope is better than fear. So I guess what I would put back to the member is that when you formulate these things and you say these types of things in the House—and maybe it is a political House, you're right—but I wish that you would take those words of Jack Layton, love is better than anger and hope is better than fear, when you formulate these types of policy attacks on people. Because I can tell you, I honestly do get offended when people—and I member—the member from Point Douglas says this all the time—when somehow it's—the accusation is that we don't care about poor people or we don't care about low-income people or people that need more help, I can tell you that's—that is not true at all. And we very much care about it.

And every member of this House—on our side of the House, very much cares for individuals. They care about individuals. *[interjection]* And I know the member from Point Douglas is talking in the background, but, you know, I would say that we have respect for your side of the House in regards to that. That's really just what I'm asking for is respect back, because I am a caring individual, and I do care for those types of people.

So, in terms of the poverty reduction, because he brought it up, I can tell you that we have made substantial gains. Stats Canada has reported, in 2017, that we are no longer the child-poverty capital of the—really, of Canada. And, you know, when we talk to our officials—and I can speak with some authority in this because I was the minister of Families beforehand—we did analysis—thorough analysis of why we're no—the—longer the child-poverty capital of Canada. And there's the child-care tax benefit that everyone got across the country. The one thing that we can point to is things like the Rent Assist program. And whether you agree or disagree with it, there is 3,000 more people that are supported in the Rent Assist program, which is a portable shelter benefit that I—the federal government has introduced with the National Housing Strategy.

I probably imagine people on the other side of the House don't disagree with a portable shelter

benefit. The fact that we have made investments in affordable housing—in fact, affordable and social housing, upwards of 500 new units that are created—and we've made other policy changes. Whether you have more money in people's pockets through the basic personal exemption or commitments in terms of tax reductions that we think will help low-income individuals. And so that's probably some of the reasons why we're no longer the child-poverty capital of Canada. And I would say that everyone on this side of the House is proud of that.

And are we there yet? No, we're not there yet, but it's important to us, because we do care about all Manitobans.

Mr. Allum: Okay, so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not going to belabour this point very long.

Well, of course, you—the members on the opposite side—on the government side, don't really want to talk seriously about these issues. Sorry, if the minister is offended. This is not a personal environment. This is a political environment. We ask questions about things that matter to the people of Manitoba. If his feelings are hurt, I'm sorry for that. But, if he thinks that his agenda, or the agenda for the former minister of Finance, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen)—if he thinks that agenda was on the side of—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Allum: —working people and on the side of low-income people—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Can we just have decorum in this building and this House—so, if we want to listen to everybody here, that would be great.

Mr. Allum: Thank you. For the record, for posterity's sake, that was the former minister of Finance heckling during the course of trying to ask a question here.

But I just want to say, when we talk about poverty, actions speak louder than words. And it's pretty clear what their agenda is.

But, for the third time, and this is—I've thrown two slow pitches at him now. I'm going to throw another blooper ball. We'll see if the minister is able to answer this. Can he, for once, simply just tell us: Why did they only extend the book publishing credit for one year when it has served the Manitoba book publishing industry so well over so many years?

Mr. Fielding: Well, No. 1, it's under review with our department, and the ministries of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

But I want to turn back to the question that we had previous from the member.

* (17:10)

So what have we done in terms of a government? We're investing in social and affordable housing. We're investing in health care, which the previous government—you made investments, but you had horrible results. Okay? So you had the longest wait times in the country. I don't think that's something that your government should be proud of, things like MRIs where under our government we made important investments. We're investing over \$386 million more from budgetary year to Public Accounts, more if you consider what we appropriate in this budget. We're attracting more doctors to this province. There's about 75 more doctors to this province, Mr. Chair. There's things, like, in terms of secondary transfers from hospitals.

So we're trying to make investments and that's going to help not just all Manitobans, Mr. Chair, but it's going to help low-income individuals.

We know what your former government's record was like in terms of the education—and I think you were the minister at that point—where we made substantial investments close to \$300 million more, Mr. Chair, in terms of education funding towards the education system. We know where the results of the former government, what the results were like where they were dead last—dead last—in terms of the results for the education system.

We know in terms of Child and Family Services that—something that touches my heart closely. I saw it first-hand for a number of months where we had the highest number of children in care, not just in Canada, but really in North America. That is a deplorable record, and so we've made improvements to the system. We're investing close to \$300 million more in Child and Family Services. We're seeing some important improvements, the first time in over 15 years that we're improving in areas like this.

So we as a government are making progress on important, essential services that Manitobans *[inaudible]* That is repairing the services that were really impacted by the former government, and I'm not sure if they really, truly understand how impacted they were. But that's a good reason why they were thrown out of office, Mr. Chair. They were

thrown out of office because of the horrible record in terms of things like health care, in terms of education, in terms of social services. Those are important—it's important learnings for Manitobans to know that, and what we are trying to do is we're trying to fix the finances so we can actually have better health care, better education, better social services and spend money more appropriately while we're trying to rebuild the economy, and we think that those are important aspects.

We think we're making some good progress, private sector investment in this province which creates real jobs for Manitobans, close to 12,000 more jobs, Mr. Chair, our—part of our process, a balanced process to really rebuild and reboot the economy that was lost under the NDP government.

So I answered the initial question right off the bat. But I thought it was important because all of those three items that I talked about are important in terms of our supports, not just for low-income individuals, Mr. Chair, but for all Manitobans.

Mr. Allum: I made a previous agreement to hand the questioning over to the member from Assiniboia for a while. I'm not really sure when we're asked to stick to the BITSA legislation, and I get an answer that's five seconds on book publishing and four minutes diatribe from the minister, I don't know how this process is being well served if he won't answer any basic questions being put to him today.

I'm going to be back. We're going to have some more Q and A, believe me, on not only BITSA, but on this government's record, because the things that he's put on the record today is disingenuous, at best, and really fails the people of Manitoba at worst.

But, with that, I'll agree to my previous commitment to my friend from Assiniboia to allow him to spend some time asking some questions that the minister—in the meantime, I would hope that he would think reflectively on the answers that he's given so far today and actually try to provide detailed answers to direct questions rather than perpetrating some kind of con job on the people of Manitoba.

Thanks.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable—does the honourable minister want to respond to the comments?

Mr. Fielding: We respectfully disagree with pretty much everything the member has said about that, but we'll move on to other questions, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): The member who—from Riverview asked a very specific question about a tax credit, and he got just a meandering, nonsensical answer. I hope we can do better.

Bill 34, the budget implementation act—bill—I'd like to know what Bill 32, section 2 has in relation to Bill 34.

Mr. Fielding: This is a direct answer, which I gave before. By the way, I gave up the answer to the original question, the first thing in the sentence in the last time. What I can say, and the member asked this question last time, so BITSA is different—is really a different creature. The loan act and BITSA are similar—that they are omnibus budget implementation bills that serve different purposes. We have our budget officials here and so we have taken back the question from the member. I can say that BITSA is a different creature than loan and appropriations acts. BITSA is used in every jurisdiction through a—different frameworks, or called different things, to the implementation of the budget, tax and other measures that require statutory, really, amendments.

To the extent amendments to BITSA impact loan and expenditures, it interacts with other two acts. For example, an amendment that increases the film tax credit under The Income Tax Act would impact the appropriations and—respecting appropriations. If the amendment in the BITSA impacts revenue, it would not impact the other two bills. So there's two—there's differences between the two. Every province and the federal government introduces at least one, although the federal government and Ottawa—and Ontario could be doing two.

The budget implementation bill happens every year. BITSA is more about the individuals and how we implement the budget rather than the aggregate amounts, in terms of what's in the budget, which are calculated in the loan and appropriation acts. It's an—important to note that, in Manitoba, when a new appropriation act or loan act is passed, it takes the place of previous interim or bridge authority, therefore ensuring that the Legislative Assembly does vote on the authority for the current year in question.

So, Mr. Deputy Chair, so that on BITSA we could say that it's related more to how we spend within the appropriations and related more to

reducing revenues or increasing revenues that it is then used to make the appropriations in future years.

So the question also asked there, inter-related—we have loan act and we have appropriation act from previous years that—and also, the interim appropriation act runs until December this year. We—no need to do it, obviously, because things have been passed. But that is the appropriate way.

And I—again, our financial officials here, we discussed, kind of, the question in nature, and that is the answer.

* (17:20)

Mr. Fletcher: The member spent a long period of time reflecting on a question which he seems to indicate that I've already asked. But yet it took at least as long for the answer or the time for him to start answering the question. I hope that doesn't go into the net time that we had, because otherwise they don't have to answer any questions. They could just sit there and be silent for the entire period.

So I hope this will—that long pause of uncertainty and doubt, and even though there's an entire battalion of staff is not indicative of what we can expect.

When we finally heard the answer, Mr. Chair, the minister demonstrated that he was able to read the notes in front of him. I wonder, will the minister table the notes he just read to the Chamber?

Mr. Fielding: I've identified what my answer is on numerous occasions to the member. If you would like I could repeat it again for you and the answer really is—the answer is the answer. We've reviewed it, and I guess your question in terms of appropriation or the time frames when BITSA is introduced, clearly we used other mechanisms, whether it be the loan act, and appropriations. We have authority under previous years to answer that, and so that answers your question.

Mr. Fletcher: Actually, my question was, would he table the material that he just read to us, page—word for word, just a moment ago? I'm not asking another question. I'm asking, will he table the documents that he just read? Like, there isn't a—it's not—shouldn't be an issue—public information.

Will he table the—in fact, will he table his whole briefing binder?

Mr. Fielding: If the member would like me to go back to our office and have the information provided,

typed out, the exact same language that I just used in answering the question for a third or fourth time that the member would asked, if you'd like us to do a letter to the member so you fully have it in writing beyond answer, which has been answered probably about four or five times, the answer is, yes, I could provide some sort of a letter that outlines exactly the information that I just talked about in the Legislature here.

Mr. Fletcher: This member has a terrible record of making commitments, of providing letters and then not doing so. I recall that letter that he promised to provide about his initiation to the Vimy arena site, the purchase of that on the Province's behalf, for a dollar, and it's ironic now that the Finance Minister has such a disrespect for taxpayer assets.

But, in regard to the \$3.8 billion that the loan act is referring to, that the minister says, well, on one hand, Bill 34 has nothing to do with the loan act, but, hey, \$3.8 billion for reasons outside of debt payment for items that are not disclosed in the loan act is a big deal. And to say, oh, it's timing, well, no; you have to do better than that. You're borrowing \$3.8 billion, you better—and then we're debating the budget implementation bill—you better be able to tell us what you're borrowing that money for.

And the minister has not been able to do this. He reads notes that are provided for him. He won't table the notes or the briefing material, and we don't get any answers. He goes off on the other questioners from the other parties asking legitimate questions and all we hear is gibberish back.

So why don't we save everyone a whole lot of time, and if the minister is just going to read his binder to us, he might as well just table the binder and include it in Hansard. Just save us all a lot of time and have some transparency.

So my question to the minister: can he break down what the \$3.8 billion will be used for? Will the minister tell us how he intends to make up for the lost revenue that the government so adamantly fought for around the carbon tax? Now there's a \$300-million gap in the budget on an annualized basis on the carbon tax. Where is the funding going to come to pay for this made-in-Manitoba green program? You know, the minister is—wants to implement it, but they've already spent the money four times over.

And, Mr. Chair, what about the \$67 million from the feds? I'd like the minister to answer, is that fund

been—or that funding been booked already in the budget as revenue or has it been marked as expenditure already? If so, why? And if not, why not?

And, Chair, while we're on the topic of the carbon tax, we might as well point out that the expenditures around the green plan, the made-in-Manitoba green plan, are not funded, because they have no revenue. Was the minister even aware that Manitoba was going to flip-flop on the carbon tax, or did he just find out like everyone else, like the rest of his caucus, the rest of the country?

Mr. Chair, Bill 34 is an implementation bill with nothing to support the implementation. Will the minister apologize?

Mr. Fielding: Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, first of all, the member is very confused on a number of fronts, so let me clarify. First of all, as mentioned, we've talked about this in a large amount of times—although this is outside of BITSA—in terms of the Vimy Arena. Let's go to the Vimy Arena. Number 1, that is not a provincial asset. Maybe the member's confused. Maybe instead of running at the federal level, he should have run at the city council level. He missed his opportunity to do so because the elections already be had. But that is clearly a municipal decision, the Vimy Arena, of the location, the zoning. He is confused. The federal government and also the provincial government have nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with the zoning of the land.

And, in fact, the land, the asset, the asset that the member is talking about, the Vimy Arena, is an asset of the City of Winnipeg, so he's very confused on that. So I want to clarify, that is not the provincial asset; it's a City of Winnipeg asset. And what I've said to everyone who'd asked—and I think it's a—divided in terms of the approach—there's probably 50 per cent of people in our backyard that are for the Bruce Oake Foundation going the Vimy Arena and 50 per cent that are opposed. But I can tell you that is a city hall decision of the zoning.

We can do anything we want to the federal level or provincial level in terms of the zoning. The reality is, the citizens and the city councillors and the city council overall, council supreme, will be making the determination on the land. So the member is wrong on those two equations.

The second, the member talks about loan act. He is confused again on loan act, because loan act and appropriations act is not a part of BITSA, so we're

not talking about those appropriations here. We're talking about the budget implementation.

* (17:30)

So the member is confused on both those items, both the implementation and the history on the Vimy Arena, in terms of the land, the appropriate use of the land. That clearly is a city hall decision, and so he missed his window of opportunity to run at the city hall level, in terms of making a difference with your community.

So I would refer him to potentially go to the public hearings, as I a bit understand the city hall process, where there will be an open session. They'll post some signs, there'll be an application that is posted at the city hall level. Big signs will go up. And there'll be a date. And residents for—and, again, I've heard from both residents that are for and against it—they'll have an opportunity, Mr. Deputy Chair, to come and make their presentations one way or the other on the zoning. And that has absolutely nothing to do with the provincial Legislature or the federal legislature or federal representatives. You can, as a citizen, go there and give your thoughts one way or the other.

But that is not a—the appropriate place. I mean, you can have an opinion on it—and I think we have a difference of opinion on it for the local areas—but that is not something that the Legislature deals with. So I would suggest that the member is confused in terms of the level of government that deals with this one particular item.

Mr. Fletcher: It is the Finance Minister that is confused.

We weren't talking about zoning at all. We're talking about the letter that the member from Kirkfield Park sent on behalf of the Province to the City to acquire a city asset on behalf of the Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation for \$1. Anyway, the member knows that. He talks about city hall. The new council is going to have to fix the—or, do their—best they can to fix the mess that this Finance Minister left when he was a member of city council. And that is the reality. And part of that is the—every shady land deal that occurred during his time.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, it indicates that when it comes to budget implementation, we have to keep a close eye on what is going on, because the track record is terrible. Terrible. It'll be decades before the city can—if it will ever be able to—dig itself out.

Having said that, the Province of Manitoba is in a lot of financial trouble. And that's not completely—it's obviously not the member from Kirkfield Park's sole responsibility, due to our financial situation, but he's now in a situation where he has to be able to explain why the budget implementation bill only was delayed. And the cannabis line is just absurd. The minister may not appreciate it, but the government didn't have its act together in the budgeting process.

And, Mr. Chair, I'll note how the minister talked about some obscure zoning from his—for the city of—rather than deal with the substantive budget issue of the carbon tax, the hole in the revenue around the carbon—how can you have a budget implementation bill and then have a major flip flop? And then, on the other hand, say well, we couldn't bring it in because we didn't know what the revenue for the cannabis was going to be. Well, you budget—okay.

Well, let's apply that logic. That logic on the carbon tax is a \$300-million hole. The minister refused—refused—to answer if he even knew that the carbon tax flip-flop was going to occur. He did not even deny it that he didn't know.

The minister did not deny that they had already booked the \$67-million green fund money from the feds as revenue. If they've done that, they're clearly not eligible for that fund now. And how is that reflected in the budget? They talk about a made-in-Manitoba green plan. Well, it seems the feds wrongly—but they have—implemented a carbon tax on Manitobans, so our obligation in that regard has been taken care of. So why would the feds provide \$67 million for—obviously, the Province has forfeited that amount.

So that's a \$67-million hole plus the carbon tax hole, and the minister apparently was not aware of any of it. None.

Now, we're talking about a budget implementation bill with more holes than the ozone layer. Will the minister apologize?

Mr. Fielding: I feel the need to address the items that were brought up by the former member. He's very confused on this topic, so I want to make a clarification.

Number 1, when it comes to the Vimy, the letter was asked about. I've—the letter was included that was sent to the City. That was part of the package, the report. I don't control the reporting system of the City of Winnipeg, but that letter was attached to the report that was forwarded on to the City, so the

member has access to the Internet and would be able to get that letter.

What I would also say is that we just had a recent vote. And there was two candidates that were vying for the city council position in the area. One clearly was in favour of the Vimy rezoning, I guess I would say, and one was opposed. Clearly, the individual that was in favour of the zoning—or had spoke, I guess, specifically more in terms of the property acquisition for it—won the election. And so I guess that is a process that will happen. The residents—and I fully support this—whether you're for it or against it, will have an opportunity to come to the rezoning and will have an opportunity to have a say, once and for all, in terms of whether the Bruce Oake Foundation should go there or not.

There is two issues that the member continuously brings up that have already been resolved, as I understand it—although I'm not on city council. But the member continues to bring up a city council-related issue—was in terms of the recreation space that were associated—the recreational dollars. As mentioned to the member numerous times, the area city councillor—in fact, the city councillors that were affiliated with the community committee appropriated, I believe, about \$1.5 million, because the argument the member was putting out there, although it was wrong information, was that, somehow, recreational types of opportunities would not be provided because of the sale cost of the actual facility.

That was addressed because the city councillor had put money in, Mr. Deputy Chair, as well as the green space. There was an argument on the green space that the member clearly knows that was decided from the city council, where the applicant for the rezoning had agreed to some sort of a joint use in terms of the green space. And, in fact, they cut off a certain element of the land that was related to it.

So I felt I needed to put that on the record for the member.

What I would also like to say, again—if the member would like to point to the actual specific piece of the BITSA bill that talks about the carbon tax revenue as well as the cannabis tax, I would be more than opening to have those discussions. But I've got the bill in front of me, and I don't see anywhere—in fact, we're talking about BITSA; we're not talking about specifically in terms of the budget, I don't see any area of the BITSA bill, beyond some exemptions for aviation fuel, that would be

associated with the carbon tax, which will—obviously will be withdrawn, you know, in the appropriate facet.

But there is no areas of this bill—and you can rule on this, Mr. Deputy Chair—that talk and answer any questions related to the carbon tax revenues and the cannabis tax revenues. So if the member would like to point to the piece of the legislation where it clearly identifies this, I'd be more than willing to answer the question. In fact, I've answered the question on that item on a number of occasions before, publicly and through other means. But, if the member would like to point to that actual section of the BITSA bill that ask those specific questions, I'd be more than happy to address those, a part of this legislative review.

* (17:40)

Mr. Chairperson: I just want to also remind—we did it before in this Chamber that we—like, under the committee here—that if we can stay on the topic of Bill 34 and not sway to talk about any other bills or any other topics. We're here to deal with the BITSA bill and so we can keep on the—on track.

So the honourable member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher), on—continuing question.

Mr. Fletcher: The—putting in context the BITSA bill, it's important to understand the track record of the people who are involved in the budget implementation and the kind of due diligence that is—and, for example, the Vimy Arena site, no due diligence was done. No options were made available.

There were no examinations of the provincial assets like the Shriners' Hospital, which is a provincial asset, the old children's hospital on Wellington Crescent, or you know, no investigation around Kapyong Barracks, where there is a major transaction underway. In fact, the government hasn't said anything about that.

Mr. Chair, the fact that the Bruce Oake Foundation has a for-profit realty association corporation is relevant and is an example of lack of due diligence. And the provincial government is doing business with an organization that also helps the political entity that the members of—member of—to raise funds for a political party.

So where else is this happening? Now, we're talking about cannabis. Cannabis was the issue where they—that was the excuse that the government used. And isn't it convenient that the government was involved in the regulation and licensing around

cannabis and saying, well, there's nothing to see here, but we're going to delay the budget implementation bill until we can introduce it—or in—to get all of this out of the way?

So, when it comes to the implementation of the bill and the borrowing of public funds, the integrity of the government and the individuals involved is absolutely relevant.

And, when we hear answers from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding,) like we did when the member from Riverview—Fort Richmond—river—review—asked his question, a very reasonable question, very specific, and we get five minutes of diatribe on that answer, how can we expect to have a proper debate about the implementation bill or the loans act? We still haven't heard how or what monies are going to be used from the loans act to help with the implementation bill.

The minister reads his notes that have been provided by his battery of civil servants that are in front, but you won't provide it to the Chamber. If we're truly transparent and the minister is just going to read what is in front of him, why not just table the briefing binder?

There's nothing confidential in it, I'm sure. It's all supposed to be public knowledge. Table the binder. Let's include it in Hansard, and let's deal with the obvious issues around the holes in the budget.

And, yes, the carbon tax is one of those holes. It's an obvious flip-flop. No wonder the minister doesn't want to answer, because he doesn't have an answer. Doesn't want to answer about the \$67 million from the provincial government—or from the federal government because he doesn't have an answer.

Well, he knows the answer, maybe, if it's in his notes, but he knows Manitobans will not like the answer, so he won't answer.

Will the minister—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Fielding: What I have found disappointing in the whole argument that the member has been talking about with the Bruce Oake Foundation at the Vimy Arena is that he hasn't been putting correct information on the record. That's what's disconcerting to me.

Again, I stated what my position is. I very much respect people that have difference of opinion in terms of the Bruce Oake Foundation, Mr. Deputy Chair. But, since the member brought it up, the concern that I had was that the member clearly was not putting right information on the record when he was distributing leaflets to communities—what—you know, as it relates to things like recreation, as it relates to things like green space.

But, quite frankly, that's a decision that voters will make, and I know previously they didn't elect—you know, in the last federal election, they decided to go a different direction than the former member was, and that was unfortunate. He was there for a long period of time.

But, really, it's up to the citizens. The citizens have just decided on the new city councillor's role and that sort. I would imagine the new city councillor will probably go into that zoning hearing with open ears and kind of listen to both sides of the equation. Again, I would encourage the member—one thing I was happy to hear is that the member finally did admit the fact that it is a city asset, so I'm glad that he does realize that it's a city asset.

Clearly, the Bruce Oake Foundation went to the City of Winnipeg, and they asked them to look at surplus lands. That was surplus land which they identified, and so the process went from there. So that clearly is a city asset, and the city council representatives and the residents will make the determinations on it.

Turning to the other items that the member had talked about, clearly the loan act, as well as appropriation act, is different from the BITSA bill, as mentioned numerous times. There is authority under loan act and through the appropriation—well, through the loan act that you borrow money on previous years.

There is two interim appropriation bills that were brought forward that allowed the government to spend money 'til December, right, and then after that, The loan act, it supersedes the appropriation levels that were passed in the last budget as it relates to the bill. And, Mr. Chair, you can rule on this. The discussions in terms of carbon tax that were—two things: the carbon tax, No. 1: the only thing in the bill that is related to the carbon tax was the exemption on the aviation fuel. That was the only thing that's in this bill that relates to the carbon tax.

Our position from the government has changed that we're going to say yes to green, and we're going to say no to the carbon tax. And although we kind of come at this different levels, I think the member and myself probably take the same opinion on this, and he obviously agrees now with the government's position.

What I would say on the cannabis tax, what is related to BITSA is in relation to the fact that the government has decided to not introduce a provincial tax on the cannabis. We wanted to keep it as low as possible. We introduced a social responsibility fee that retailers will help pay, and the remittance of this fee will be paid in June of 2020. That's a part of it. And there is nothing in this bill, unless the member can find something in BITSA, that talks about the revenue in BITSA as it relates to cannabis and the revenues that would be associated with it.

So the member's confused. It has the revenues that are associated with both the carbon tax, and also the cannabis is not included in the BITSA bill.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher)—or the honourable member for Wolseley.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Quick question for the minister: Given the recent hike in national interest rates, what is the current borrowing rate for the Province when it looks to borrow money on the market?

* (17:50)

Mr. Fielding: For the most part, it's around 3.5 per cent, but it really depends on the term—whether it's five-, 10- or 20-year term. But that is kind of a general figure of the interest associated with any borrowings the government of Manitoba does have.

I can tell you that on an annual basis now, we're spending close to a billion dollars on debt-servicing charges for the government. So that is over a billion dollars in monies you can't spend in things like health care, things like education, things like social services or infrastructure. But for the most part it's around 3.5 per cent, on average, for our interests associated with any debts we're taking on.

Mr. Altemeyer: I thank the minister for that question.

Second question, has the \$100 million this government has pledged to establish a conservation

trust been provided to The Winnipeg Foundation yet for investment?

Mr. Fielding: We have committed over \$102 million to the conservation trust, and we'll be making that appropriate flow of money with The Winnipeg Foundation. We'll be making the appropriate timing of that in the next coming months, and the time frames and the flow of money.

Mr. Altemeyer: I thank the minister for that answer as well. And similarly, has the government flowed the \$2 million that it had earmarked for the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation?

Mr. Fielding: I would refer to appropriations act. This is—there's nothing in the BITSA bill that talks about the appropriate level of funding for it, but I can tell you that we made commitments in our budget, and we will be fulfilling those commitments and government will—making decisions on timing in the coming months.

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to return to some questioning.

Last time I was able to ask a question or two of the Finance Minister, we were talking about the book publishing credit, which, according to the BITSA legislation, has only been renewed for one year.

The minister, in a five-minute answer, spent 12 seconds on that by saying that tax credit's under review, and then he was on to some other explanation about something.

So could he tell me—or, tell the House, why this credit has only been renewed for one year?

Mr. Fielding: Well, we have renewed a number of tax credits.

To be fair, that was the first answer I did give when you asked the question. I answered specifically the question I was asked. Are you going to answer it, yes-or-no type of question? I specifically answered that, yes, we did renew it for a year, and there is a review that is going underway.

We've reviewed a number of tax credit programs, and so we think that Manitobans would want us to review the appropriateness of it, but we thought it's important to extend it. We haven't made a decision one way or the other on it. There is a lot of merits to it, but we want to review that, and I think that's an appropriate exercise for government to do.

Mr. Allum: The minister's a little confused. I asked for a yes or no answer on the Education Property Tax

Credit, not on the book publishing credit. But I can appreciate some confusion on that side. There's a lot of questions that are coming that way.

But could he tell us—tell the House, then, what is the nature of the review that's going on, and with that particular tax credit, who is he consulting? Who is he talking to? What—in what manner is this tax credit being reviewed?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I think, like most tax credits, you want to do a return-on-investment review, a value-for-money type of review. We'll be talking, obviously, to stakeholder groups that are associated with the credit, and we want to review all aspects of it. That's similar to other reviews that we've done throughout government on—whether it be a tax credit, any other thing else, other reviews that have been going under way with Manitoba government. And clearly we want to make sure we get all the facts before we make a decision on it.

Mr. Allum: Well, the minister was confusing his tenses in his sentence there. He said first of all that it's under review, and then he says, but we'll be going out to speak to stakeholders like the Manitoba book publishers association, which means he said it was under review, but he actually hasn't talked—or the minister hasn't talked to anybody about it yet, and so it leads me to believe, I suspect, that the minister, in fact—it's not under review at all and that they have no idea of what they intend to do next year, only leaving Manitoba's book publishing sector uncertain and unsure of what direction the government's going to go.

Now, the leader of the opposition and I met with the Manitoba book publishers association several months ago before the last budget. We committed to them that we would keep it, of course, but that we would hold the government to account in the event that this particular and very valuable credit was cut. Instead, all that's happened, like with so many other things, whether it's advertising public notices in newspapers or the book publishing tax credit, there's a sword of Damocles that hangs over the head of those involved, not knowing from one year to the next what may happen and what the result might be.

And I would suggest to the minister, this is no way to operate as a government or as a minister of Finance, that he has an obligation to be crystal clear on his intentions moving forward, especially as we're heading into the budget consultation process now.

Maybe the minister might help us to understand where they're going by commenting on whether his government supports the local publishing community, and do they believe in promoting and protecting the voices of local Manitoba authors?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I have been minister for three months. I can tell you that the previous minister met—has met with the book publishers and printers over the past year. In fact, they've met more than once over the last two years. We renewed this on a one-year basis as we do a review. You know, I'm not quite sure what the member is concerned with, a review. It does seem pretty logical, where we are able to review things, have a return-on-investment review to certain things. We're obviously reviewing the film tax credit, of course, as well with these things. So these are normal courses of action that you do when you're trying to make common-sense decisions on investments for Manitobans.

I've heard a lot of good things about the tax credit, but to be fair, that process is ongoing. There has been staff meetings that continuously meet with individuals in this industry. And, as a new minister, under the first three months, I haven't had an opportunity, but I will in the coming months, to have some meetings and dialogue. In fact, I think they may be one of the stakeholder groups, a part of the budget consultation, that we will be engaging.

*(18:00)

And so I'm not sure what the concern is with reviewing these types of things, but that is a normal course of action for governments to do.

I would imagine—I would hope that all governments would want to review all investment expenditures as we go forward, as we look to make important investments for Manitobans.

Mr. Allum: Well, the concern is that the former minister of Finance, if indeed he did do any kinds of consultations with the Manitoba book publishing association, would well know the—both the tangible and intangible value of that particular tax credit to the book publishing industry and, by extension, to the print industry and to authors in Manitoba. It's crystal clear about the value of that particular tax credit. It pays itself back in many varied and different ways, both tangibly and intangibly.

So when he suggests that he's not sure what the member's concern is, well, the concern is, like with all things with this government, is that something that's proven to be tangibly and intangibly valuable is

going to be cut by the government. So will he—minister give us his commitment that the one-year renewal will actually be extended indefinitely in the next budget?

Mr. Fielding: Well, we're not going to make mistakes like the previous government did when the other member was a minister of the Crown. We are going to make reviews and make important investment decisions. I understand it's an important tax credit. A review is under way. We're going to consult with stakeholders.

I don't know how much more we can say on it. That's what the review is for and we look forward to meeting with stakeholder groups and reviewing the process going forward.

Mr. Allum: Well, I can only hope that the minister does, indeed, talk to the stakeholders in this regard.

I know that book publishing in and of itself is a positive economic generator for Manitoba. But I also know that it provides a—multiple, intangible benefits to Manitobans as well. And so I'm not sure that that nature of that equation of both tangible and intangible value actually meets with the minister's definition of value for money. And that's a—real concern for book publishers. Certainly, it was a concern for the film industry and is broadly a concern with this government when it comes to the arts in general, that deliver both tangible and intangible benefits to our community.

Will the minister commit to publishing the results of his review in relation to the book publishing tax credit?

Mr. Chair, point of order. Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: Point of order on—the honourable member for Fort-Garry Riverview (Mr. Allum).

Mr. Allum: I'm not quite sure—I asked a very direct question about whether the minister would publish the results of his alleged review of the Book Publishing Tax Credit. He's now engaged in a three- or four-minute conversation with staff, which—he should be able to answer a pretty simple question like that without a long discussion with staff.

This is not about staff, but it's about him in particular wasting the time of this House.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the minister have the—any comments on that point of order?

Mr. Fielding: Right, well, I would say that I have an appropriate amount of time to confer with my staff. I don't think that's inappropriate. I haven't heard that it is, unless you think it is.

But I would—what I would say is, we'll be meeting with stakeholder groups. There is proprietary—some proprietary—

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

You should be dealing with the point of order at this point in time, okay?

For the member for Fort-Garry Riverview (Mr. Allum) on this point of order, it's—it—that is why the staff are in here, is just to actually ask questions to the staff members and to get answers. So I would say that it's not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister for Finance on that question—to answer the question.

Mr. Fielding: On the point of order or on the question?

Mr. Chairperson: On the question.

Mr. Fielding: The question?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

Mr. Fielding: Well, I would suggest to them that I will be meeting with all the stakeholder groups in the coming months. That will be part of the review process. I can say that there is proprietary information that is associated with some of the tax credits.

I would have to say that I probably would need some permission from those people that are involved for any publication. There is obviously information—there's proprietary information for them running a business that would—decisions would be have to made around that.

Mr. Allum: I guess I'll leave the point of order alone. It's been solved, although I'm not sure why the minister would need to consult with government civil service staff on a question of—the political question of whether he will agree to publish his review or not. That seems more like a political question, not something he needs to consult civil service about.

The government has also—in the BITSA legislation, talks about the Child Care Centre Development Tax Credit. Could the minister identify

how many spaces he expects to create as a result of that tax credit?

Mr. Fielding: Two hundred.

Mr. Allum: I thank him for the—that quick answer. And how much will the tax credit cost?

Mr. Fielding: Tax credit is a \$10,000-per-spot refundable tax credit. It is something, whether a centre spends the construction dollars or not, that will be appropriated for centres. We hope to create hundreds of new spaces, although the cap is at 400.

If the program is successful like other programs, we would probably look to expand it. We think it's a new and innovative way to create spaces. I can tell you that there is immense interest from workplaces to create these types of spaces.

There was a similar program—I would say similar program—there was a program at the federal government where they tied a tax credit to construction. We haven't done that. We've tied a tax credit to creating spaces as opposed to the construction of spaces.

*(18:10)

There is some appropriate, you know, infrastructure that you have to set up for child-care centres that might be a little bit more unique than other centres, but we think it's important that we have innovative ways to create child-care centres, and I can tell you that there's been immense interest in this credit by all workplaces.

Mr. Allum: No, I think the minister misunderstood. I get that it will be \$2,000 per year over five years, making up to \$10,000 tax credit. What I was asking was how much will this tax credit cost in sum—in total as a result of the 200 spaces that he's—alleges will be created from it.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Fort Garry—I mean, the honourable Minister for Finance.

Mr. Fielding: Well, I would say it really depends on how many people apply for it.

Mr. Allum: Well, that's a difficult proposition.

He can state—the minister states quite definitely that this will create 200 spaces, yet he's unable to tell us how much the tax credit will cost because he's unsure of the interest and/or appetite for the tax credit in the business community.

I would assume that they've projected out how much this will cost the treasury over the course of

the year, and I suspect he has an answer for that. So, if he wouldn't mind, we'd like to know what—how much—in total—the credit will cost this year—fiscal year.

Mr. Fielding: It could be equivalent of \$400,000 for this year but, again, we don't know timing of when people will apply.

The mathematics is pretty straightforward in terms of the overarching cost of it, but as government reviews this to see if it's successful or not and if it's innovative—and all indications are that there's a lot of interest in a credit program like this that's going to create spaces—then government would, of course, be silly not to review the process, and it would be effective going forward.

Mr. Allum: Maybe the minister could tell us who was consulted prior to the government coming up with this in the budget and then putting it in the budget implementation bill. Who was consulted on this particular tax credit?

Mr. Fielding: We consulted the Manitoba Child Care Association. We consulted with parents. We consulted with other individuals within the child-care sector.

Mr. Allum: Well, that's pretty—that's good if that happened. We have no reason to know whether that actually happened or not. As is consistent with this government, they talk about a broad, comprehensive consultation, but we never see in print what they were actually told, who actually participates or what actually happened. So you can appreciate how frustrating it is, especially in relation to the fact that the wait list has grown dramatically since this government has taken over, since April 2016.

Very, very few new spaces have been created at all, and the only real reference to child care within the context of the budget or BITSA relates to providing a tax credit to business—which is no surprise to those of us on this side of the House, as the Finance Minister bends over backwards to make friends in the business community.

He mentioned earlier that we crossed paths at City Hall, and absolutely. I was a public servant at the time and I know that he bent over backwards working with the business community then. And so it's troubling that the only reference to anything in relation to child care within the budget—or, even more specifically, in relation to the BITSA bill—is this decision to give \$400,000 to the business

community in the event that maybe somehow possibly child-care spaces will be built and created.

It's on this government that they've done such a poor job of addressing child care in this province. They would always want to say to us, well, yes, the wait list grew. Well, the wait list grew because Manitoba's population grew dramatically during the—our period in government, and we created thousands upon thousands of spaces across Manitoba—self-standing spaces, spaces in schools and other co-operative opportunities for child-care space development.

So it's troubling for us that such a poor effort has been made to—by the government to address such a critical issue for families here in Manitoba and that all we see in the BITSA legislation is a tax credit that really does—that may or may not have success is disappointing to say the least.

Another of the tax credits that's caused us considerable indigestion on this side of the House relates to the caregiver tax credit, which the minister has now decided that it would simply be a flat rate of \$1,400. We fail to see, on this side of the House, how this is going to make life more affordable for seniors and families who care for them. Would he care to explain to those seniors and those families why he's putting a limit on this very important tax credit, in—especially in the context of an aging society here in Manitoba?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, well, I guess maybe I'll just address some of the confusing comments that the member made and just address that. You know, I can tell you that I was the minister for two and a half years, and if you want to review my schedule of how many meetings I met with social service agencies to somehow suggest that I'm just listening to the business community I think would be fool-hearted. That's not the case.

In fact, most of the people that are coming to talk to the—budget consultations are social service agencies. And I spent the last two and a half years meeting with numerous groups, indigenous organizations. We've made substantial investments in the—in child-care sectors. Just recently, we signed a \$47-million agreement with the federal government to create close to 1,300 new spaces.

We know that, under the previous government, the inclusion support that really supports children that have either behavioural extra needs or autism was dramatically underfunded. In fact, under the

previous government, they capped that amount for a number of years. Since 2012, they capped it, the amount. And so what we did is we worked with Ottawa, and so we identified over a \$10-million commitment inclusion support for individuals that need that—higher need—created a dual-track system.

We know the endless amounts of red tape—I call it orange-red tape, that were associated with the child-care sector, that the previous government tied these organization in knots because of the love for red tape that they have in things like child care. And that really hurt child-care centres, and that's why there are so many spots that were waiting on a waiting list when the member got kicked out of office with the rest of his colleagues that we've had to address.

And so we've tried to take a balanced approach in terms of addressing child-care needs. We've made investments, important investments, in child-care sectors. We've identified areas of need. We've also created some new and innovative spots under the child-care—child tax credits, and we've also identified red tape to allow businesses to grow and prosper, as well as making sure that we're addressing online people, the training. We've created something called the living textbook, which is something that child-care sectors, Mr. Chair, were very much asking for but were refused by the NDP government to address this.

And so those are some aspects of the child-care sector that we've been working with. I think the child-care sector have been very complimentary in terms of our approach when we've introduced new measures or funding models—not funding models, but new funding commitments in terms of child-care spaces, so we're very proud of our investment, and we'll continue do as such, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Allum: I—the minister's a question behind, as usual. I was asking him about the caregiver tax credit, which has been fixed at a flat rate of \$1,400, which really does nothing to encourage affordability for seniors and their families who care for them.

If he wants to have a discussion around child care, we can do that, but we were trying to get some information about this tax credit that's been given over to the business community, yet there's been no funding increase for child-care centres in Manitoba since 2016. Very few new spaces have been created by the government on child care—a fact it's a dismal, dismal record for the government.

* (18:20)

We know that the federal government has provided them with upwards of over \$40 million on child care which goes back to the point I've made many times about this government: they're freeloaders off of other people's money, but they don't actually do anything on their own.

If he could, then, could he this time, though, actually address the caregiver tax credit and actually tell us how this helps make life more affordable for seniors and their families who care for them?

Mr. Fielding: And I can say that we, as a government, are very proud of the investments that we made in child-care sector. We know the disarray that was left under not just the child-care sector, but things like health care, especially education. You know that was what was troubling to us. The results that we were seeing in education were really troubling in terms of the reading, writing and arithmetic. Finishing last was something that really is troubling. We had some concerns about that, and so we made appropriate investments.

The NDP is, you know, talks a lot about spending commitments but, for the life of me, with all this overspending because they were bad managers in their systems, they didn't get very good results.

What we'd like to do is make it easier for Manitobans, not just in terms of funding appropriate levels, but making it easier. The Primary Caregiver Tax Credit significantly streamlines the process by which caregivers access the credit. It eliminates the need for pre-approval by Manitoba Health and Manitoba Families, implements a flat \$1,400 fee, Mr. Chair, and, really, the proposal simplifies the credit by removing complicated paperwork that the NDP put in place that continued on under their administration for 17 years; also simplifies the credit by implementing a flat \$1,400 annual credit available to all eligible caregivers, and thus eliminating the requirements for a daily log.

And, although the NDP loved red tape and making sure there was more red tape in place, we don't think so. We want to simplify it for Manitobans. We made improvements as a result of a continuous improvement to lean exercise that were really undertake by the Health, Families and Finance. It's a refundable tax credit for long-term unpaid caregivers and the average claim is established or estimated at \$1,390. Around 15,000 caregivers will

claim the credit each and every year, and the total value is about \$17.4 million in '18-19.

So we think that streamlining the process for people that are in very much need of this because they're taking care of loved ones will help them out and they won't have to go through the same red tape that they had under the former government.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we can continue, I just want to remind—this is the third time I had to say that this is getting too loud in here. It's disrespectful for both colleagues of both sides, so if you can just respect them and let them answer their questions and ask questions, I would really appreciate that.

Mr. Allum: Well, if the minister wants to have a debate about education, I'm quite happy to have that with him any time. It's a deplorable situation, in my opinion, that a minister of the Crown chooses to run down our education system day in and day out based on one test that's done once every couple of years.

He diminishes the role of our public education system in our society; he diminishes the contribution of teachers that they make to our society and our communities; he diminishes the role of education assistants that they play in our society, of principals and administrators. He should be ashamed to put that kind of nonsense on the record when it comes to a public education system that, while it can always be improved, and we always said it could, has done very well by Manitoba families over our term in government, and the only thing that his government has set out to do is to cut the system at every single opportunity. If he wants to have that debate inside this House, outside this House, I'm more than welcome and willing to do so, but I would ask him to, respectfully, not to continue to diminish the public education system in Manitoba. It's a rank insult to our educators, to our students, and to the people who contribute to our public education system every year.

Now the minister, in addition to fixing the tax giver—tax giver—caregiver tax credit at \$1,400 has also being responsible for a government that has cut rehabilitation therapy for seniors at the same time in hospitals and reducing coverage for chiropractic care as well.

Taken together, how can he 'possivly' justify these kinds of actions in the face of a growing and aging demographic population of seniors here in

Manitoba, and how can he possibly ensure quality care for seniors as a result of this kind of action taken by his government?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I guess what we were concerned, when we came to office, is the results of the former NDP government. We know what the results were for many, many, many years, and so we're trying to make improvements in terms of the education system.

That's our sole goal in terms of repairing some of the services that were very much—weren't meeting the needs of Manitobans. And so what we're trying to do is repair some of the services that are in place. We have made importance investments in education. And the member talks about items—we're trying to streamline the system.

Back to our previous point about the primary caregiver, we know that primary caregivers, they have a lot of more important things to do by caring for the individuals that they love and they care for than to spend time with all the red tape and—associated with tracking and monitoring the hours that are associated with it.

We think that a streamlined process will make it a little bit easier for people that want to and can apply for this tax credit and allow them to give more time and energy to the ones that they're loving and the ones that they're—involved in the care. So we think a streamlined, less-red-tape system is something that will be taken up quite well.

The member also talked about chiropractors. We made some changes in this legislation as it relates to incorporation. There is a number of health-care professionals that have the same sort of incorporation aspects to the way they run their operations. And so we think that is entirely appropriate, and we think that it's something that the chiropractic association, if you asked them, were asking for for a long period of time.

In fact, we had a presentation from them very recently at our budget consultation on Thursday that talked about the important nature of those changes that are being made, similar to other health-care professionals.

Mr. Allum: Well, I remind the minister that in addition to keep—making the caregiver tax credit flat rated to \$1,400, in addition to cutting rehabilitation therapy for seniors recovering in hospitals and

reduced coverage for chiropractic care, this was also the same government that imposed new taxes on seniors for education as well.

We had committed and were on the pathway to eliminating education taxes for seniors, knowing full well that they'd paid their fair share, and the government, the former Finance minister, cut that as well, one of a number of amazing cuts. When they tell us that, they raised taxes, nobody raises taxes quite like this government, especially on seniors and especially on those who can least afford them.

It's been the standard operating procedure of this government since April 2016, and it won't be long before Manitobans come to understand quite clearly the devastating impact that the cuts to services that have happened for any number of other elements, both within the BITSA legislation and in the budget itself, that have hurt Manitobans.

Now, I know that the minister is on record as opposing rapid transit. I also know that he was opposed to something as simple as an affordable transit pass for students back in his day when he was at City Hall.

I forget whether he was the chair of finance or the—or chair of the Police Board when the new police station was being built. And we know the dramatic over-expenses and allegations corruption in relation to that particular project during his time at City Hall, but I know he's on record for opposing rapid transit and on record as opposing something as simple as a transit bus pass for—an affordable transit bus pass for students.

Would he care to make a commitment to the House today that as a former city councillor—

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

The committee—being 6:30, call in the Speaker.

* (18:30)

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Pivniuk): The hour being 6:30—past 6:30, the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 29, 2018

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