

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

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
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, April 1, 2019

*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.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that the House do now proceed to the orders of the day.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Government House Leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

The motion is in order, and I would also note for the House that this motion is not debatable and does not require notice.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**Madam Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, will you please call for third reading debate, Interim Supply.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, will you please call for debate, Interim Supply, for third reading.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will now consider Interim Supply this afternoon.

#### DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

#### Bill 28—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019

**Madam Speaker:** So we will move on to debate on concurrence and third reading, Bill 28, the interim appropriation act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Assiniboia, who has 12 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, on a point of order—a matter of privilege.

**Madam Speaker:** Could the member please clarify if it's a point of order or a matter of privilege?

**Mr. Fletcher:** It's a matter of privilege.

#### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a matter of privilege.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, misleading the House is a serious offence, and, unfortunately, that is exactly what occurred last week.

I will quote: We heard from a government minister during the debate that if this bill was—had to pass, that's so that, quote, civil servants get paid and other programs funded. This was from the Government House Leader.

Madam Speaker, this is a false statement. The government in our 'westminister' parliamentary system cannot default. It cannot prevent payment of its obligations or the paycheques. What the minister did to this House and, consequently, to many civil servants is threaten their pay.

Now, Madam Speaker, that is impossible. It's—a government shutdown happens in the States. Perhaps

the government members are watching too much American TV. I will endeavour to explain to them the powers that they have and why this is a mess, why the government has misled the House.

Madam Speaker, in the financial 'countbilty' or the fiscal appropriations act there are the following clauses: The use of account, 26.1(4): The Minister of Finance may, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor, apply all or any part of the balance in the Fiscal Stabilization Account to support core government operations in a fiscal year or to repay debt.

I'll table the documents that show that there's \$255 million in that account.

Payment out of consolidated funds, 29(1): No money other than trust money shall be paid out of consolidated funds without the authority of this or any other act or legislation; 29(2): Payment of the amount appropriated money has to be paid out of the consolidated fund. Fine, but part B says, to pay expenditures that were in accordance with an appropriation for a fiscal year. So, like, the government can actually go back.

Payment of expenditure occurred in a prior year, 29(3): for greater certainty an expenditure that would occur in the fiscal year in accordance with the appropriation of that year discharged the appropriation may be paid out of the consolidated fund at the end of that year.

Special warrants, section 32(1): (a) An expenditure by or an expenditure for a public service not foreseen or provided for and not specially provided for is required for the public good, and (b) the Legislature is not in session or is in session but is adjourned indefinitely for a period of more than 10 days. That is what has happened. We've been adjourned for more than 10 days. They can use a special warrant. They shouldn't use the civil service as the pawn. They should just do their job.

Where—now, let's go to the next one. When no appropriation exists, 32(3): When a special warrant is issued through spec to an expenditure for a public service for which there is no appropriation the amount provided by the special warrant is deemed to be an appropriation for the civil servants specified by the warrant for the fiscal year for which the warrant is issued.

Section 33: Treasury Board may direct that all or part of an expenditure authority in the service heading in an appropriation that is described as an

enabling appropriation for the purpose made for that purpose be transferred to another service heading made in—well, made available in relation to that.

When, 34: Use of an appropriation. No appropriation shall be charged with an amount that (a) for the purpose other than what the appropriation was provided for—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

I would ask the member to move to explaining as to whether or not he's met the two issues that have to be met when there is a breach of matter of privilege and that is timing, and the member also needs to move forward and demonstrate whether a prima facie case has been demonstrated.

\* (13:40)

So I would like him to zero in specifically on that and also to remind him that he is going to need to pass in—on paper, in writing, a motion that he must soon get to.

**Mr. Fletcher:** The prima facie case is: In the middle of my speech last week the—my time limit expired and this is the first opportunity to speak to it, though I did say in my speech that there are a zillion ways that government in our 'westminister' parliamentary system can pay its bills. It is impossible for it not to, and I am—and this is the first opportunity that I have had to raise this issue in over 10 days.

And it is a—not an issue of debate because it's an issue of fundamental governance, and if the government doesn't know what their powers are and threatens the entire civil service of a government shutdown, which is a very Trump-like action, I need to bring that up as soon as possible. This is my soon as possible.

Now, the breach is—and I do have a motion, Madam Speaker. The breach is misleading the House. I have just—instead of reading all the sections, I'll just spend a moment—look, in the financial appropriations or financial act there is section 35, loans. There—if there's no appropriation they can take out loans. There's 46—41(6): If there's no legislative authority, or no sufficient legislative authority, for payment under subsection 2, the Minister of Finance may pay the money or money to the extent of the inefficiency, as the case may be, out of the consolidated fund without any legislative authority other than this subsection.

Forty-two—this is a good one—expenditure authorized agreement of Canada; they can use

money from Canada. There is accounts, accountable advances.

Forty-six, this is the good one: The Minister of Finance may make accountable advances under the consolidated funding such amounts as may be required for the purpose of providing, extinguish—one of these legal e-words, literally—but it's—they can pay whatever they want to, especially and facilitating the public service.

Madam Speaker, section 52–50.2 is relevant about raising money; section 53, advances by the government; 61(1), supplementary loan guarantees and authorities; 63(1) administration; 63(3) not—it's a notwithstanding clause, which basically is a get-out-of-whatever free; self-sustaining debt, the minister may declare any provincial security in—and basically utilize its assets any way he or she wishes.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

I would indicate to the member that he is not really dealing with a prima facie case. He is instead putting comments on the record that show he disagrees with comments of the government.

I would encourage him once again to deal with the issue of how the privileges of the House and the member have been breached, and I would ask him to move forward into that as quickly as he possibly can.

So, with all due respect to the member, there is no need for him to make all of these comments about his differences in opinion, but what he needs to clearly indicate is where there is a matter of privilege, where the—his privilege or the privileges of the House have been breached.

So I would ask the member to get to that summary point, please.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Okay, I'll table the rest.

But what I will say, that the breach is contempt for this House and for every member in it. So it's the contempt of this—of the Legislature and the individual contempt because what the fear tactic of making the threat that somehow this government or the government would not be able to pay its bills is wrong. And it's not wrong; it is impossible. It's totally inappropriate for the government to mislead this House in that way—completely inappropriate.

My motion is: I move, seconded by the member from The Maples, that a committee of the Legislature be struck to provide government MLAs tutorials and

remediation—remedial education starting with the Manitoba grade 5 curriculum on our 'westminster' parliamentary system and provide suggestions on watching Canadian news rather than American's news—presumably, MLAs have confused the government shutdowns in the United States under President Trump with what is impossible in Canada—and that we recommend that they watch more CBC, CTV and Global, and less Fox, CNN and NBC.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that remarks at this time by honourable members are limited to strictly relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** On the issue of a prima facie case, the pith and substance of the member's argument seems to be that the government was incorrect about the inability to pay bills and public servants without the passing of Interim Supply.

I would say to the member, and I will put on the record, that I consider him to be a friend and a long-time associate and I don't want that my comments to be indicative of anything other than that.

But I would say he is clearly wrong. Madam Speaker, he is absolutely wrong. This is a routine order of the House where the budget hasn't passed by the time the new fiscal year begins—which is always the case in Manitoba and almost every other legislature, I believe, in Canada and probably the Westminster parliamentary system of democracy—that when the budget hasn't passed by the beginning of the new fiscal year, you have Interim Supply. And that Interim Supply provides a portion of the budget which is being debated—although not getting voted upon in terms of the implementation bill, Madam Speaker—provides that bridge financing to allow programs and public servants to continue to be paid.

This is normally a routine order of business. I've never seen an opposition that has stopped this from happening. Because, even though we have political differences, those political differences rarely and should never involve the public service, others who are providing services to us. And so, clearly, we need this to be passed.

And the member issues or raises the issue of special warrants. Special warrants are for when the House is in recess, Madam Speaker, from—the House isn't in session. Otherwise, it is to the House to determine appropriation and money issues. When the House is in session, as this House is in session, it is for the House to collectively make that decision, and, yes, the government has a majority.

But this is not a dictatorship. Members of this House are invested with individual rights. Then at—that member has the right to speak. He has 12 minutes left to speak. Other members, if they want to choose to speak on this, they can speak on this as well and they can run the day out if they choose to. That power is invested as individual members and that power should be maintained in individual members.

But we have a collective responsibility, and normally that is exercised by these members in this House, and it was that way when I was in opposition. I suspect it's been that way for many years, that there's an understanding that we don't play political games with public servants and the inability to pass Interim Supply would prevent, going forward, there to be salaries to be paid and programs to be maintained, if that is not passed today. And that is why we have taken these extraordinary measures to have orders of the day done quickly and done first, Madam Speaker.

Now, I'm saying, in conclusion, to the member opposite—again, who I consider to be a friend—this is not an appropriate path to take, Madam Speaker. We have been back in session for about a month and the collective sum of that member's contribution to this House has been to be censored by the Speaker, to have to apologize to the Speaker and collectively to this House and now to put the pay of civil servants at risk. That is not an appropriate action for a legislator. That is not how I know the individual to be, and I know that he is a man of greater substance than that and I ask him, I implore him, to allow this bill to pass and let government function.

\* (13:50)

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** In respect of the member for Assiniboia's (Mr. Fletcher) matter of privilege, I will leave it to your great wisdom in respect of whether or not this was at his earliest convenience and whether in fact it is—fits within the criteria of a matter of privilege.

But I do just want to take a moment, Madam Speaker, to put on the record that we in the NDP fully support the passing of the Interim Supply bill and recognize how important it is for salaries and programs to continue and to get paid.

So, in concert with my colleague across the way, I would also just gently and respectfully ask the member for Assiniboia to get on with the business of the day and let's ensure that the people that voted us in and that we all work for get their pay and their salary.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (Second Opposition House Leader):** Just briefly, Madam Speaker, we want to make sure that civil servants get paid.

I have listened to the member for Assiniboia and the House leader of the government. One of the problems that the House leader has is that this government has put so much misinformation before the Legislature in the last few weeks that now the government has a credibility problem. And although—

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —the—even though the House leader may be right on this occasion, because of the problems of his lack of credibility and his government's lack of credibility, there remains an issue and concerns. And I think that that is in part why this is now being debated, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Oh, the honourable member for The Maples, on the same point of order—or matter of privilege.

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** Madam Speaker, I was not aware of the—that I'm going to second this motion, so I'm not seconding this motion. So I withdraw that commitment.

**Madam Speaker:** I would point out for the members that what the member for Assiniboia is raising is not a violation of the privileges of the House or of members. It is a matter that the member's currently entitled to have an opinion on, but it is not a matter of privilege, and nor does the Speaker determine the appropriateness of fiscal actions like this.

So with all due respect, the member does not have a matter of privilege.

**DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE  
AND THIRD READINGS**

*(Continued)*

**Bill 28—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019**

*(Continued)*

**Madam Speaker:** The—I will now move back to debate on concurrence and third reading of Bill 28, the interim appropriation act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Assiniboia, who has 12 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

**Point of Order**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Madam Speaker, on the last day and just now the government made a series of false statements that threaten the payment of the civil servants of this great province and the great services that they do.

I'd like to give the government one last opportunity to apologize to the civil servants.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** We will never apologize for protecting the pay of public servants, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I would point out to the member of Assiniboia that this is not a breach of the rules or practices of the House, and he does not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** Now, I would ask him if he is interested in moving forward on his 12 minutes of debate on Bill 28, the interim appropriation act.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Madam Speaker, the government has all sorts of authorities—special warrants—which are for situations just like this. All the criteria are met and you can read the act. I'm tabling it just for your information. And—the—and there's a dozen other ways to do it.

Madam Speaker, put—the—that threaten the pay of the civil servants is completely irresponsible. All that has occurred is the opposition doing its job. I wish the government would do its.

Now, here, I got some interesting flashes from the past here. This is 2013. This is a quote from Jennifer Howard: Let's be clear about the vote against second reading and third reading. They voted against the ability of the government to continue the fund, the programs and services that Manitobans count on next week and next month. The Lieutenant Governor is here. The Tories kept him waiting all afternoon. They didn't agree to sit for an extra 10 minutes to give royal assent. Who said that? The NDP government House leader, Jennifer Howard. The reply was: We are here to approve the government's agenda. The government's on the wrong track. Who said that? The Premier (Mr. Pallister), the MLA for Fort Whyte.

Winnipeg Sun, July 22nd, 2013: I think we are in a position where if we co-operate we can ensure everyone gets paid. Who said that? Jennifer Howard. Why—the reply: Why would we be placing—why would they be placing the fear of God in front-line civil servants when they have indicated all along that people wouldn't miss their paycheques? Who said that? Bonnie Mitchelson, the MLA for River East.

Winnipeg Free Press, July 19th, 2013: That pay period could be missed. We don't have the PIN to the bank card after July 31st. I don't know why they want to wait. I don't know why that serves—this is a quote—the leader of the opposition's political agenda. We don't wait until a catastrophe to act. These guys want to be government? I shudder to think about that. How is this being responsible to Manitobans? Jennifer Howard, government House leader.

The reply—and I think the member knows this is coming—and the reply: This is self-induced hysteria. They have absolutely no ability to manage this so they cause panic. The only fiscal risk is the fiscal risk of their own making. The only fiscal risk is the government stays in power. Who said that? The MLA from Steinbach, that speech.

July 16th, 2013: They see this as a negotiation. I don't think you can hold Manitobans hostage to score political points. Last week I understood that they said is what they would—operative—on Interim Supply. Today, at the first opportunity they blocked it. No reason given. Every time they block this we get closer to challenging—we have to make challenging decisions.

Oh, everyone, listen to this one. Quote: What politician wants to be responsible for anyone getting laid off unnecessarily, right? It's, of course, not anyone's best interests to do anything but continue to

serve that—to serve and offer—or whatever—to the people. Who said that? Oh, it was the MLA from Fort Whyte.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Yes. No, it's true.

Then it's not in our—it's not our intent to hold up paycheques going to civil servants. That's not our intent, never was, never will be. Technically, the Interim Supply motion could be dealt with within an hour. That's true. We are standing here on principle. Who said that? The MLA for Spruce Woods. PortageOnline 2014—[interjection]—2013. So—oh, the irony, Madam Speaker, the irony.

\* (14:00)

It's them that's running over the cliff. It's not a fiscal cliff of anyone's making but their own. There isn't any party here that wants to see the shutdown of the government services. I don't want a single teacher, nurse or civil servant to have anything but a wonderful summer with their families. I want to be very clear that there's absolutely no truth to what the NDP is asserting over there. And who said that? The MLA for Fort Whyte, and it—the context is far worse than what going on here. Far worse.

Okay, so I have to get on with these things. The only way to avoid a fiscal cliff is co-operation with everyone in the Legislature. Everyone has to take responsibility. We're heading into uncharted territory now. We've never seen the opposition—such a torched earth policy. We need to ensure that money is available for services that Manitobans count on. That was the NDP House leader.

The reply: It's self-induced panic. We said we're going to stand up for Manitobans and we intend to do that. Who said that? The MLA from Steinbach.

Yes, it's unbelievable hypocrisy.

July 11th, 2013: What it means is the government is getting a raise and they're asking for a bigger one each year while Manitobans—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Fletcher:** —get cuts.

I seriously doubt that the cliff even exists. I think it's a scare tactic. It's a desperate government that will say anything to try and get its way. What politician wants to be responsible for anyone getting laid off unnecessarily? It's not in anyone's best

interests, but the government service is for the people. Who said it is just a scare tactic, a desperate government? It was the MLA for Fort Whyte, the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

On June 6th, 2013: It's—it limits the government need to defend their initiatives; and, unfortunately, it limits the opportunity for the public to become aware of the government's agenda. Talking about the budget process, the debate, who said that? The Premier.

I'm going to speak as long as I'm able to on Bill 20. Who said that? The Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), MLA for Steinbach.

Okay, there is another one: We're using the rules that are available to us to stall Bill 20. It is certainly my expectation that the debate will go into July without closure. Who said that? The MLA for Steinbach, the Government House Leader.

We will sit until we need to sit to get business of the House through. That's the role of the government. That's true, actually. Who said that? The NDP—Government House Leader.

What an idea. What a good idea. And, Madam Speaker, it goes on and on and on. I just wish I had more time.

Madam Speaker, the government has demonstrated a breathtaking amount of hypocrisy. They complained about a matter of privilege that I raised last week in regard to a minister of—sole-source contracting. That is what they're referring to. That's what they're referring to.

And how many times did the Speaker of that time shut down and even kick out members of the current government? Well, that will be an interesting tale to tell.

Madam Speaker, the government has used Trump-like tactics to scare and bully the people of Manitoba into believing that somehow they would not get their government services. That is the United States system.

Our system is the 'westminister' parliamentary system. A government shutdown is impossible. There are many ways to avoid it. The government leader misled this House. The government is delaying itself and I wish we had a better government.

**Madam Speaker:** The question—or is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is that Bill 28, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019, as reported from the Committee of the Whole, be now concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

All—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

\* (14:10)

We will now proceed to royal assent.

I am advised that the deputy Administrator's about to arrive for royal assent for this bill. I am therefore interrupting the proceedings of the House for royal assent.

### ROYAL ASSENT

**Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Ray Gislason):** Her Honour the acting Lieutenant Governor.

*Her Honour Diana Cameron, the Acting Administrator of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed Her Honour the Acting Administrator in the following words:*

**Madam Speaker:** Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba asks Your Honour to accept the following bill:

**Clerk Assistant (Ms. Monique Grenier):**

Bill 28—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2019;  
Loi de 2019 portant affectation anticipée de crédits

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** In Her Majesty's name, the Acting Administrator of the Province of Manitoba thanks the Legislative Assembly and assents to this bill.

*Her Honour was then pleased to retire.*

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** Please be seated.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to revert to routine proceedings.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to revert to routine proceedings? Agreed?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** I heard a no.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Will you please call for second reading of Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 16—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019

**Madam Speaker:** The House will now move to debate—on second reading on Bill 16, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Minto, who has 28 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** As I was saying, Madam Speaker, it's disappointing we have this Pallister government that is trying to distract with its many hundreds of thousands of dollars advertising campaign to try and mask all of the negative things that are being brought upon the people of Manitoba by their budget, and we know that this budget cuts more money from health care on top of the cuts to health care that have already been made; and I'll talk later about the impact of closing three emergency rooms in Winnipeg.

We know this is a government that's been cutting capital funding from the health-care system, in fact, by another \$7.2 million, and those were investments like new diagnostic machines, emergency-room upgrades, personal-care-home beds and new primary-care clinics.

And I'll have a chance with the small amount of time that is offered to me, Madam Speaker, to talk about some of the attacks on the future of our kids' education by cutting supports for special needs kids in the classroom, by cutting funding for universities and colleges for the second year in a row even as they crank up tuition on Manitoba students.

And we know, of course, there's cuts to day-care supports by another \$1.5 million, not even keeping pace with the increased pressures on that program and certainly not in any way respecting the fact that things are getting more expensive.

And those are the hard facts that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government are not telling Manitobans.

The Premier's only real move in the budget will mean that Manitobans—well, they'll save 7 cents on the lunch special at the Spring Roll Restaurant at the corner of Downing and Notre Dame Street, which I highly recommend. I don't think too many people are really going to be bank those 7 cents in savings.

What people do know is they'll be paying way more on their hydro bills. They know that they'll be paying way more for their children or for themselves to obtain a post-secondary degree or diploma, and they know they're going to lose critically needed child care on top of, of course, losing all of the things that we've talked about in health care.

We also know that people will be watching their streets, whether it's in Winnipeg or in other communities across this province will be—they'll be watching their streets and, of course, the highways that connect our communities crumble as this government pulls out hundreds of millions of dollars out of the infrastructure budget.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has only one plan to get to fiscal balance and that's by cutting, and that's by cutting the services that mean the most to Manitobans and, as New Democrats, we believe that there is a better way.

Now, of course, even as we go, every day we hear more and more about what this government's cuts are doing, especially in our health-care system. And, you know, last week was not a good week for this government when it comes to health care. We know, of course, for months and months and months, of course, this Minister of Health and the previous minister of Health have said, well, you know, the CIHI report, the CIHI, they're impartial; the CIHI report's so important.

And then, of course, the CIHI report came out and said that once again we've had longer wait times for hip replacements, for knee replacements, for cataract surgery. For other types of surgeries those wait times continue to go up. They've gone up from 2016 to 2017 to 2018, and this government's only answer is, well, you know, we've thrown some more crumbs at it in the past year; I'm sure next year, forget about the past three years, maybe next year things will be better. Well, people are understanding that things are not getting better.

And what else did we learn from the information put online by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority? Well, we know that emergency wait times continue to go up, and who knows what the excuse will be. I was fascinated, actually, to hear the biggest excuse that was put forward by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

The government's excuse is: Well, of course, wait times in emergency rooms are terrible because we're doing such a terrible job of dealing with

methamphetamine in this province. It is truly awe-inspiring this government would try to hide behind their own failures to try and justify an increase in wait times in Winnipeg's emergency rooms.

We also heard one of the justifications for this further increase in wait times as being the fact that there were more ambulances showing up at Winnipeg ERs. What did they think would happen when they closed the Victoria emergency room, when they closed the Misericordia urgent care centre, when they have grossly understaffed the Concordia ER and the Seven Oaks ER, which is now requiring ambulances to travel farther and take more and more people?

\* (14:20)

Is anybody surprised? Well, outside of the government caucus, I don't think anybody is surprised.

And, of course, on top of what was truly a banner week for this government when it comes to health care, the ultimate indignity was revealed on Thursday afternoon. I was actually out in my own community, standing in front of what used to be the education resource centre where teachers from across the province would be able to receive resources to help them with curriculum, help them with their classrooms, and I was out there as people began to see the government advertising, which I presume was intended to try and encourage nurses to come to Manitoba or people to take up the profession of nursing.

And it was a photoshopped picture. Actually, it was originally a spa picture with nurses' scrubs and a stethoscope photoshopped onto one of the nurses as they—as these three alleged nurses took a selfie. I can't imagine anything more inappropriate. I couldn't imagine a government having more of a tin ear than to run that kind of advertisement.

And what did we hear from the Minister of Health? Well, I believe his line on Twitter was, well, that was odd. It wasn't, I apologize. It wasn't, I'm the minister and I'll take responsibility. It was, well, boy, there's some staffer or there's somebody in communication services that is going to get thrown under the bus.

It is impossible to believe that the Minister of Health did not know or have one of his political staff quite aware of the message they were going to send out to Manitoba nurses, and I can tell you my colleagues and I have heard from lots of nurses since

that advertising campaign was exposed, and those nurses certainly have an earful for this Premier (Mr. Pallister), this Minister of Health and this government.

You know, it was a speech, I suppose, on the budget, Madam Speaker, that I read a quote from George Orwell's 1984, a book which, of course, is becoming, frighteningly enough, more and more topical, and I read a passage where the protagonist, Winston Smith, is finding it hard to believe that the government is actually announcing an increase in the chocolate ration for the people living in their totalitarian state when, in fact, Winston is aware that just last week that ration had been decreased. And he worries and he wonders and thinks, well, is it the fact that people are actually going to buy the fact that somehow this government is increasing when, in fact, they've been decreasing?

And here we are today with a government that's trying to ignore the fact that they cut a billion—a quarter of a billion dollars from the—from health spending in the last year and they're cutting a \$120 million from the health-care budget this year, and yet this Premier and this minister have the audacity to stand up and say, well there's never been more money for health care.

And this government can't even—can't even—acknowledge the fact that, in addition to the cuts they're making, even to keep the health-care system at the same level there would have to be increases to take into account price and volume.

And we heard the Health Minister complaining about volume, telling us that, wow, it seems to be there's more people that need these procedures.

Yes, that's what's happening when your population is growing, and that is what's happening when the population is getting older, and, unfortunately, this government is sadly incapable or disinterested in meeting those targets and in meeting those needs.

We know they're getting massive increases in federal transfers coming from two fronts. Of course they're getting more money from health care, including additional pots of money that are supposed to be used for certain valued purposes and also getting, of course, in this year alone, more than \$200 million more from equalization.

The Manitoba economy is sputtering along at such a poor rate compared to other provinces that the Premier and his Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding)

have their hands out to receive another \$200 million from the federal government, and yet they have the audacity to complain about what the federal government is doing.

We know this government has cut health funding, health capital funding, by \$7.2 million, and these are investments like new diagnostic machines. And, you know, I know for the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), I'm glad they finally opened your MRI—three years late. I'm glad they got it done because now they're bragging about it and they're saying, look, we opened an MRI; look how many more MRIs we're doing.

Well, that's great—three years too late. *[interjection]* I know the member for Dauphin is thanking me and my colleagues for raising this in the House. I'm happy. I'm happy for the people of Dauphin; I'm happy for the people of the Parklands. They can't explain why they waited three years to have the MRI machine running, but they finally did. But their cuts mean there won't be other communities that have equal or the same right to a new MRI or a new CT scan or to other new equipment, and they won't be able to get it because this government has cut the funding.

We know, of course, that this government's sole comments on personal-care-home beds, aside from the ones that we started that they were able to open, is to announce that some year down the line, maybe after 2021, maybe 2022, maybe 2024—maybe when some of the young people up in the gallery are moving ahead with their hockey careers at colleges or universities across Canada and United States—maybe by then there'll actually be a new personal-care-home bed built and opened by this government, but not for a long time.

And even the ones they've announced, has it been in Lac du Bonnet? No, it hasn't been. Has it been in Transcona with the Park Manor home—which, of course, had had the promise of new personal-care-home beds. Nope. No, it's Carman and it's Steinbach. Because with this government the only way you're going to get a new personal health care—personal-home-care bed built is if you have a community that's wealthy enough to be able to raise the money and to be able to support that.

#### Introduction of Guests

**An Honourable Member:** Madam Speaker, I'm happy to give way.

**Madam Speaker:** I wonder if the table could please stop the clock, and we—I thank the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) for doing that.

We have some very important guests that have just joined us in the gallery today, and I think everybody would like to acknowledge them. They are the 2019 ACHA Division 2 national champions for—Assiniboine Community College Cougars. It's a women's hockey team and they are just back from Texas after winning the national championship.

So welcome to the Manitoba Legislature. Thank you for bringing such pride to our province.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** And I'll now turn the debate back over to the honourable member for Minto, and thank him for allowing us to do this.

**Mr. Swan:** Congratulations to these champions that are with us. This might be the high point of the afternoon, although, you know, I still have a few high points to hit in my speech.

Getting back, of course, to health care, we know that this government cut the primary health care budget after shuttering the Family Medical Centre in St. Boniface. This is the Family Medical Centre that 3,000 Manitobans rely upon to be able to use those services. Of course, one of the major advantages is having all of those specialists and experts in one place.

One of the other advantages, of course, is the Family Medical Centre located very close by St. Boniface general hospital actually features a number of health-care professionals that have admitting privileges across the street at St. Boniface general hospital. That means, of course, that right now if somebody arrives at the Family Medical Centre with a medical issue, and a doctor upon examining them realizes there is an acute issue—you know, whether it's a blood clot, whether it's actually someone having a cardiac incident, they are actually able to get them across the street and admitted within minutes.

But, instead, with this government's short-sighted decision to close that Family Medical Centre, when those people are able to get to St. Boniface Hospital they'll be waiting in the emergency room; and as we know, they'll be waiting longer than they were this time last year, longer than they were this time last month as conditions continue to get worse and worse.

And we know, of course, that we're seeing the impact of the other cuts. We know, of course, already about the wait times in ERs. We've been hearing more and more about the understaffing and the overwork that Manitoba nurses are feeling. And I mentioned in my budget speech, but I think it's important to mention again, one of the biggest challenges that—is that so many personal-care homes, so many other facilities, so many hospitals have now been told by their employers trying to meet this government's cuts that they are now not going to replace the first vacancy that happens on any given shift.

\* (14:30)

So if there's a nurse who's ill, if there's a nurse who's injured and is unable to finish her shift or to work her next shift, there is actually no way that that ward is going to be fully staffed. So now when a nurse gets a call at home saying would you be able to come in and work a shift on your day off or would you come back even on your holidays, would you come in and work a shift, not only does that nurse know that he or she is needed to bring the ward to full complement, the nurse now knows that if they're being called by that facility, they're being called to come in and work on a ward that is going to be short staffed even after they get there.

We're hearing from nurses that, frankly, aren't answering their phones. Nurses who don't want to come in and work overtime when they know that they're going to be on a ward that is understaffed and their own need for self-care, their own need to protect themselves is actually becoming stronger than the nurses' overriding wish and need to do the best for Manitoba patients, and that's a shame and it's not necessary.

It's not necessary because this government has the additional money from the federal government. It's not necessary because this government could have taken a different route than to take another \$300 million out of its revenues this year. But instead they made this choice and health-care providers but, more importantly, patients and their families are feeling it.

We know that this government has taken a page, well, right out of the '90s, straight out of the Filmon years by reducing the number of nursing student positions at Red River College so the number of nurses coming in will be fewer and fewer.

I know, Madam Speaker, from my office on Sargent Avenue, I have the chance actually to meet lots and lots of foreign-trained nurses. My name has got out; I sort of joke I'm the fastest notary seal in the west, and many foreign-trained nurses come to see me at my office because they know that I'm prepared to notarize documents that they need at no charge, and I'm very happy to help those nurses.

They have been telling me how long it takes for them to be able to get their credentials, for them to actually be able to work as nurses in our system. And I've talked to nurses that have been waiting for a year, for two years, sometimes longer, to be able to become certified as a nurse here in Manitoba.

They're working as unit assistants, or they're working in other capacities in our health-care system but not able to work at their highest level of training which is as a nurse. And, again, that is a shame.

And, again, all this comes down to the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) promise, the solemn promise that he made an answer to a very specific question just days before the election in 2016. And it was by somebody who's concerned about health care, who said, Mister—well, at that time, opposition leader, I won't mention his name, but they said: will you promise to protect front-line services?

And the man who is now the Premier of this province gave his solemn vow to Manitobans that he would not cut front-line services, a promise which has been broken every single day in Manitoba.

I want to move on, just a little bit. Of course, with the celebration we just had as we welcomed champions from Assiniboine college to our building to talk a little bit about education, and we're worried that what we've seen in health care over the past three years, well, we now have the blueprint for what's going to happen to education in the province of Manitoba.

And it's no secret, but the Premier's plan for education is, he's making deep cuts and he's causing chaos for teachers and children, just like he did with patients and nurses.

He's put, I guess, the right guy into the job. He's now moved the former minister of Health, who, of course, I consider to be a friend, who's a very talented politician, who has always been able to be the most effective voice on their side to try to deflect, to try to justify, to try to explain away the cuts in the health-care system.

And now I've talked to so many teachers in my community, across the province, friends of mine who are very, very worried about what this now means for Manitoba education.

And this budget, even though, again, there were other options open to this government, well, this budget made no attempt to reverse the harmful cuts of the past three years.

We know there's cuts to school divisions that are going to put programs for children at risk, we know that busier classrooms, packed classrooms in some cases, don't mean—don't allow kids to get the one-on-one attention that they need and we know that this government has decided, more so than any other cohort or any other group of people in this province, they've decided to put the onus of moving towards a balanced budget on the backs of Manitoba's university and college students. And it's been really a shocking series of decisions this government has made.

The first thing, of course, they did was to get rid of the tuition fee tax rebate. Manitoba students, or students who stayed elsewhere who came back to Manitoba, or who decided to move to Manitoba were actually entitled to a rebate of 60 per cent of all the tuition they had paid, whether to the University of Winnipeg, or Manitoba, or Dalhousie, or UBC or Harvard, whatever the case, and this government took that away.

Even students who'd counted on that, students who had moved back to count on that being there, and who as a result had the lowest marginal tax rate in Canada—let me repeat: the lowest marginal tax rate in Canada—had that taken away from them.

And what about prospective students? Well, one of the first things this government did is they froze the minimum wage. We know that only a small number of people that are working minimum wage jobs are young people. However, for students there are a substantial amount of those people who are working at or close to minimum wage, and this government froze minimum wage for two years; and now they've passed legislation which we opposed that will only allow minimum wage to increase by the rate of inflation.

Yet, at the same time on a parallel track, this government passed a law—with our opposition—which would allow tuition fees to rise by that same rate of inflation plus 5 per cent each and every year, meaning that students have to work harder. They

have to work more hours whether it's trying to pack it in during the summer, maybe taking a second job in the summer, or whether it's trying to work more hours during the week. It is getting tougher and tougher for Manitoba students—and, of course, Madam Speaker, I was born and raised in Winnipeg. I was lucky enough to be able to live at home when I went to university for five years, through two years of commerce and three years of law school. I could hop on the bus or I could carpool and then get home every night.

It is actually much, much more challenging for those students who come from other parts of the province, and I'm really surprised that none of the rural MLAs in the government side have ever stood in this House on behalf of their own students, on behalf of kids in their communities that they know have to come in to Winnipeg or Brandon or elsewhere to get their post-secondary education. I'm surprised that not one of them has ever stepped up to say, you know what, these cuts and these tuition increases actually have a huge impact on young people in my community. I want better for them. I'm going to stand up to this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this Finance Minister and this Education Minister and do something. But, sadly, we haven't seen that.

We know that within the K-to-12 system they've cut special needs funding. What does that mean? Well, that means less educational assistants and other paraprofessionals to support kids in the classroom, that means less accessibility to equipment and upgrades, and it means less resources to improve learning outcomes and ensure the success of special needs students. And the really chilling part is that these cuts—again, unnecessary cuts—have happened before this education review, such as it is, has even been completed.

Budget twenty-nine is going to pay for more cuts. We now know that this government's going to spend \$750,000 on this education review committee to find more cuts. And maybe Clayton Manness, who mused publicly that maybe the cuts to education hadn't gone far enough, well, maybe he'll now get the opportunity to finish the job; and that makes everybody in this province very, very worried.

Now, we know that this government chose to close the curriculum library that's located in the Robert Fletcher Building in my community—Portage Avenue just by Erin Street—and I was there on Thursday afternoon with about 60 concerned teachers and parents. I missed the one before it when

some of my colleagues are able to go. But I was there and spoke to a number of teachers, spoke to a number of parents, spoke to a number of school trustees, people concerned about cutting the resources for this library, and they were frustrated that this government's story changed—I can't recall now if it was five or six times that the Minister of Education's story changed.

\* (14:40)

When we first raised concerns about closing this library and making it unavailable for teachers and others to contact it to go there, the first thing we heard from this Minister of Education is, well, no students were going there, so no big deal. And then we reminded him that this was never set up for students to go like a library in a school. The Minister of Education then changed his tune the next day to say, well, very few teachers show up here, only whatever per cent of teachers ever walk in the door.

Well, teachers will tell you that they don't count on walking through those doors unless they happen to work right in that area, as some teachers in our schools do. If you are a suburban teacher, if you are a rural teacher, if you are a northern teacher, the benefit of this library was that you could phone up and speak to a person at the library to explain what was going on in the classroom, what kinds of educational materials you needed, what particular challenges students in your classroom have, and then the people there would package up the information that was needed and they would send the package to the teacher, who would then be able to open up the maps, books, charts, planning guides—whatever it might happen to be, and be able to provide better resources to their students.

And then the Minister of Education changed his tune again and said, well, no other province has this, and we've been hearing back from teachers saying, well that's just not true. There are other provinces that provide this resource because they know how important it is.

And then we heard the Minister of Education say, well, even with all that in mind we're going to put everything online—and I'm not sure how he thinks Braille materials for children who are blind are going to be put online. I'm not sure how he understands or if he understands all of the other things that teachers and parents who homeschool their children as well, are able to access from this resource.

And there was a lot of anger along Portage Avenue. There was a lot of frustration and, again, we have a government that is plowing ahead with a completely unnecessary cut—

**An Honourable Member:** Cut first, think later.

**Mr. Swan:** Cut first, think later, says my colleague from Flin Flon.

And, of course, now we're going to have an Education Minister that maybe is just getting started and I believe his line, which he said to the CBC just a couple of months ago, is that nothing is off the table.

And it will be the ultimate irony, Madam Speaker, if the Progressive Conservatives, who complained bitterly about rural municipalities, some with a population of under 500, having to amalgamate, it is going to be fascinating if this Progressive Conservative government stands up and tries to justify school divisions which represent areas with tens or even hundreds of thousands of residents and tens of thousands of students, if they are going to stand up and they are going to insist upon forced amalgamation.

It is going to take a leap of logic, perhaps never seen in the province of Manitoba, for them to be able to stand in their place if, indeed, that is where this education review is going, and as you talk to teachers and talk to administrators and talk to school trustees they are very, very worried that that's exactly where this government is going to go.

And we'll make sure that we have the Hansard ready. We'll make sure we have all their quotes ready. We'll make sure that we fight against that because we know that our school divisions are doing a good job of providing local control, being able to access local priorities, being able to make sure the decisions they make are in the best interests of the students in their areas.

So, you know, I could go on much longer, but I know some of my colleagues also want to speak on BITSA, so I will certainly give way because I'm always happy to hear what my colleagues have to say, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

#### **Speaker's Statement**

**Madam Speaker:** I have a statement for the House.

Prior to proceeding with debate I have a very special introduction for the House.

Members may have noticed a new face at the table, and if you haven't already met him I would like to introduce Mr. Tim Abbott. Tim started with the Assembly last fall in a term position as a Committee Clerk and, while he remains with us on a term, he has recently been promoted to Clerk Assistant, Clerk of Committees. This means that in addition to working in committees, he will also serve here in the Chamber as a table officer.

Tim holds a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Reading, in England, and he has several years experience working with public sector and government accounts for an IT consultancy in the UK.

We are very pleased to have Tim coming aboard to help us through this session while our Clerk Assistant, Andrea Signorelli, is off on parental leave.

On behalf of all members, Tim, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

#### **DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**

*(Continued)*

#### **Bill 16—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019**

*(Continued)*

**Madam Speaker:** Continuing on, then, with debate.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition):** It's a pleasure to speak to the BITSA bill.

There are a number of very serious concerns with it. Although in the bigger picture, one of the issues with the approach of this government has been that they're still endorsing trickle-down economics, which was once described as the idea that if you stuffed a horse with as much oats as it could eat, it would leave more for the sparrows at the other end.

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

This is one of the great frustrations; this is an ideology. It's not been proven by empirical means, and it's really, it's an ideology that's about pushing wealth upwards and giving cuts to the people at the top, at the expense of the people at the bottom. And that's unfortunately what's been going on for many years in this province.

And we have to talk about the bigger picture of the budget anyway. One, which is of course that one of the fundamental changes that has happened in terms of financing this province is our transfers from the federal government.

There've been major changes in health transfers, not just in the amount that has been transferred to Manitoba, but fundamental changes to the formula. One of those changes was a change, voted in, I believe, 2007 or 2008, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was in fact a Member of Parliament.

And that change saw a shift, a fundamental shift in the way that health care is funded federally. Away from health care being funded on the basis of need, on the basis of, say, the number of people who are sick, how sick they are, poverty, an aging population, all those things that contribute to differential health care—different health-care costs from province to province, and it shifted instead to a strict per capita funding model.

Now, this is—there's a fundamental argument here: the difference is between whether you're going to treat everybody equally, even though some people are homeless and some people are billionaires, or the other is if we're going to actually going to treat people some degree of equity. And, frankly, equity is the most important part of this, and that was one of the things that fundamentally changed.

And as a result of this change, again, which the Premier voted for, Manitoba saw a permanent reduction in the amount of funding that it saw in terms of health-care transfers; \$31 million a year lost. Which of course accumulates over the—over decades.

But the other is that only one province really benefitted, which was Alberta, which saw nearly a billion dollars a year increase in funding. And this is, again, I—it's—it was something as presented as being fair because it's on a per capita basis, but it doesn't actually deal with the fact of distributing care on the basis of need.

The second is that a formula was changed, where the Province of Manitoba, used to—and all provinces used to have a 6 per cent per year increase, which has changed to 3 per cent out of the previous Conservative government, and which unfortunately has been maintained under the current federal government.

They have tried to top it up with \$400 million, in terms of—which is supposed to be dedicated for mental health and home care. And for some reason, we have yet to find out that the Premier delayed 18 months signing that.

So this is—when it comes to the big picture of how this government, our—all governments across

Canada, all provincial governments, federal governments have a critical role to play in funding. And one of the things that happened is that prior to 2015-2016, under the Conservative federal government, transfers to Manitoba were absolutely flat, that even though—and with the result that even though our population was increasing, and, of course, aging, and that we—this—the provincial government was put under far greater fiscal pressure which has been relieved, to a great degree, by the current federal government, which has now increased CHT funding by \$731 million a year at this point.

And, the frustration there, again, is that this new funding, this federal funding that has flowed, has been happening—even though as this funding's been going up, the actual spending on health care has been frozen for the last three years.

\* (14:50)

So when the Premier and the members of his caucus say that they are spending more money than ever, that is actually not true, that the—or it's inaccurate. That the—what's happened is that in a single first year, spending went up because it was still being done under a previous NDP government budget, but since the next year the actual amount of spending was lower and the year after that it was marginally higher.

But basically, it's a straight line for three years straight, even as the government is receiving more money from the federal government, but also as it's firing people, freezing wages and forcing the health-care system to go through a radical change, which, of course takes resources, and the kind of resources that it takes tend to be used up at the administrative level. So what we have is doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and other caregivers who are being forced to pay the price for the changes that this government is forcing on the health-care system which, as I've argued many times, is simply not necessary.

Because one of the challenges—we'll say that the problem with politics is that it's so political—but one of the challenges in looking at Manitoba's budget and its budget performance is precisely that it has been so coloured by partisanship and not just partisanship, but partisan stereotypes of how particular political parties behave.

So the stereotype of the NDP, for example, is that they spent a lot of money when, in fact, there were many errors where they did not, as the PC party acknowledged. And they talked about how the fact

that there was a lack of spending on infrastructure for example. Then some of the areas where there was a large amount of investment were actually in building prisons and not, say, in housing, and the result is that there was this expectation that the—or an assumption that the reason why there is a deficit or why revenues are lagging behind spending is because that it has to have been overspending, but it's hard to point out exactly where that overspending was supposed to have taken place when, in fact, there were cuts occurring and restraint occurring under the previous NDP government as well.

So then this is a fundamental when it comes to what the diagnosis of what Manitoba's problem is in terms of its fiscal health, its deficit, because a deficit is, by definition, just a gap between revenues and spending. And one of the challenges here is that it was caused by a number of things, and one of the—one of them was that there was, in 2008, a global financial crisis which fundamentally altered the global economy, including Manitoba. Manitoba saw a 'relvelby' better, was shielded in many ways from the recession, but our economic growth has still never really recovered and it's been getting slower since, with it projected to slow next year.

In fact, there's—the Conference Board of Canada, especially, has warned that we could be seeing growth under 1 per cent, and this is critical because when we're talking about the number, the amount of money that this government has been willing to leave on the table, \$1.9 billion in terms of—because there's \$400 million for health care, which now looks like it will flow, \$400 million for housing and another \$1.1 billion, that is actually enough, that's more than a 0.1—more than a percentage point in GDP growth that we may be sacrificing, and one of the things about it is that that sacrifice is a—that—a lost year is a lost year for a worker and a—or for a business.

Again, I've spoken to businesses who are concerned that they might be facing bankruptcy, they have to lay people off, they're not able to hire full crews because while this government has said they will always spend at least \$1 billion but they actually—on infrastructure—what they actually mean is they will spend no more than \$1 billion, and having promised much more than that, there are many companies and workers, private companies, in Manitoba, who are incredibly frustrated, as well as municipalities, with the—with massive cutbacks because they are simply not able to hold on for two

or three years with the hope that this funding may someday flow.

And one of the things that happened after 2008 is that there was a fundamental reckoning, which Canada has not really dealt with because it absolutely—because so many banks in places like the UK collapsed, so many banks in the USA collapsed, banks all across the world, Canada was one of the few places that—where it didn't happen.

But what happened afterwards was essentially a giant experiment in policy, where in Europe, after 2008, the countries which stimulated their economy, and this was also true of the United States, where people invested in order to put people to work—did much better.

But it's not just a question that it isn't a—that there are ways in which there are multipliers that are simply not well understood and, in fact, have been ignored for a long time. One is that if you spend a dollar into the economy or invest a dollar into the economy it can, of course, have multipliers, so by not spending \$1.1 billion in infrastructure where there can be a return of 15 per cent or more, as well as tax revenues to government, as well as other spinoff effects.

The other side of it is that a dollar in cuts can actually reduce—result in more in lost economic activity. So, in Europe after 2008, in some of the worst cases, a single dollar in cuts would result in \$1.70 in lost economic activity.

And this is simply a risk which I think the—which, again, I've been talking about this for a number of years before I was elected leader, before I was elected MLA, that as essentially a warning because the old methods of trying to deal with these things have been disproven; that cuts and austerity will—are more likely to lead to a recession than they are to growth. And it is also being done in a totally different context than in previous years.

One of the issues, for example, is that during the 1990s, when there was room to make changes in terms of austerity, in part because the country had lowered its interest rates. Where—our interest rates are already extremely low and one of the most dangerous things facing our economy is the level of private debt—is that literally hundreds of thousands of Manitobans are at the breaking point in terms of debt.

That 55, 56 per cent of the population, which is more than the rest of Canada, is \$200 away from

insolvency because of debt levels which are at around 170 per cent of personal income. And this actually—the thing that's the most—biggest concern is that this is actually what causes downturns, this is what causes recessions is when people have too much debt and they can no longer afford to—they can no longer afford to keep taking on debt. They default and these defaults spread.

And this is actually—this is why, I think, that this budget and BITSA, as well, are both—are risky because this government has not been putting money into growth. In fact, they've been—they've essentially been choking off growth in all sorts of ways. Not simply by refusing to invest in infrastructure, which is absolutely critical and where there are areas where strategic infrastructure could expand economic growth, but the changes we have seen up North, where there—offices have been closed so people can't take out business permits if they want to start a business.

Cuts to Hydro have resulted in new businesses that want to start not being able to hook up for months at a time or the fact that the government has completely lost its ability to issue—or, apparently it's lost its ability to issue to mine permits in anything like a useful amount of time, so that we actually have prospectors and mining companies leaving Manitoba because they cannot get the permit to do the work.

And in the bigger picture, the decision to cut the PST this year is ultimately—I'm—it was—surprised that it was a decision that the government was going to make, especially because they are choosing to keep borrowing and to postpone balancing the budget for years, apparently for another four or five years, in order to deliver this PST cut.

And it may seem tempting in all sorts of ways. The fact is, is that most Manitobans will not see a very particularly significant benefit from it; particularly not if 55 per cent of the population is \$200 away from insolvency.

\* (15:00)

But the other is what we're looking at in terms of what we're adding to debt, because this PST cut is not being done at a time where we're running a surplus. We don't have a \$300-million surplus which we are going to be returning to Manitobans in the form of a PST cut.

Instead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to be borrowing \$300 million year after year after year for a benefit—\$300 million, sorry, year after year, for a

benefit that the government estimates will be \$90 million. Well, if that were an investment, we'd be borrowing \$300 million a year with interest in order to get \$90 million back. That is an absolute losing investment. We have lost two-thirds of our investment.

So from a point of view—from an economic point of view—from the point of view that it's actually undermining the government's finances in the long term when we're looking at a possible slowdown in the economy and the economy's slowing down to a 20-year low, being less than 1 per cent growth next year, it's because these—it's actually that this government's policies are a choice to deliberately shrink the economy by freezing wages, by laying people off, by refusing to invest.

And the bigger challenge about that is what looks—what happens beyond that, because with the path that this government is currently on, with its—with restricting revenues for the government and then restricting the government's ability to invest—is that it basically looks like we are looking at perpetual austerity.

And the problem again with this is that the private sector, to a great degree, is so indebted that it is not in a position to be able to invest and there are all sorts of things the private sector just does not invest in—roads and bridges—that ultimately there are things that are in the public interest and the public good that need to be paid for.

And the history of all developed and wealthy nations is that these things have been invested and have been paid for through public means and the most important way to be a competitive jurisdiction and a competitive society is to focus on having good infrastructure, good health care and good education so that everybody benefits—individuals benefit as well as business—but we are not actually seeing any of those things. In fact, those key areas are all being cut up on—cut back on.

I do want to mention the changes to The Election Financing Act which again I asked what—if anyone had been asked about whether there'd been any consultations in this and there was no addressed—or nothing had happened.

And I have written about support for elections in the past, public support for political parties, public support for elections and the fact is is that we live in a deeply unequal society, we live in a deeply unequal country and the fundamental premise of elections is

that they are one person, one vote, not one dollar, one vote; that in order to be able to have a free and fair exchange or in a—and really competitive elections, we have to have—we have to balance out public support and find a way for people to contribute, either as candidates or as parties, without having to take huge personal financial risks, which is something that many people simply cannot do.

So we want to have—want to be inclusive in terms of ideas, we want to be inclusive in terms of people who are participating in democracy as candidates and parties that we have to go—there's a reason why we have always had these measures in place, but it's also the question of who—of, in economic terms, of incentives; who are we actually being responsive to when we are—in terms of revenue for a political party in order to be able to run a campaign?

So one of the fundamentally—one of the differences between whether you have public financing which exists in the United States which is something that the Republican senator John McCain was a huge advocate of. He was incredibly upset about the role that financing played in—and money played in politics because ultimately our goal as politicians and as servants to the public should be to be responsible to the people who elected us and not just the people who finance our campaigns.

And the fact is that within—in Manitoba there is only so few people who will—who volunteer and so many people who have the means to donate to political campaigns. Again, I'll return to the stat: 55, 56 per cent of Manitobans only have \$200 a month to keep—they are only \$200 a month away from insolvency and that's—that makes it incredibly hard for them to participate but they are—but especially when we contrast it with the new donation levels, in terms of—that get generous tax credits.

So we cannot just—I think it's profoundly inappropriate and profoundly undemocratic to simply be—to have a public subsidy that only works for donors and doesn't compensate for the fact that what is supposed to be the single most important principle of democracy is that we are all equal at the ballot box, that is, one person, one vote.

Because the challenge, again, with—that this is, in my opinion, an attempt on the part of the ruling party to create an unfair advantage, to create an unfair playing field, simply because one of the issues of how campaign rebates have worked in the past is

that people are able to spend X amount of money knowing that—they know they only have to raise a certain amount of money knowing they might be able to borrow an extra amount of money and finance their campaign more readily provided that they can actually get that—use that rebate to finance their loan, to pay off the loan. It actually makes it—and this is one of the critical things because it essentially means that not having that in place restricts the ability up front of people to be able to finance their campaigns.

The other concerns that I had when we talk about The Fuel Tax Act, the issue of charging or not charging the PST on the carbon tax is again mostly—is a symbolic gesture in that it would only save individuals, I believe, \$3 a year for each Manitoban which is not particularly meaningful.

The other challenge of the PST cut is that, again, that it's—I don't know if I'll say I'm surprised that the Province is advertising it; it hasn't been passed yet; it hasn't been—we only—we had enough difficulty passing Interim Supply, so the idea that the government is going to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars promoting the PST on billboards across the province is breaking the PC campaign promise from 2016. There's—I don't really see any justification for spending money on billboards on this when we've been asking for more than a year for the government to actually engage in some kind of awareness campaign around meth.

So it's really unfortunate and, frankly, again, the question of distribution is all important because one of the things that really matters is that, again, because we live in a society where not everyone is equal, the impacts of tax cuts and the impacts of service cuts hit people very, very differently, and one of the things that's happened is that this government has tended to have tax changes which benefit people at—which tend to benefit people at the top. That's even true of the changes to the income tax while, at the same time, all sorts of other costs are being dumped onto individuals who, frankly, can't afford it.

And one of those issues, actually one of the most fundamental ones, is the treatment of Hydro by this government which, again, is not all that different than what transpired under the previous government, that really Hydro has been used as a piggy bank in a way that's incredibly—that is dangerous to the financial existence of Hydro, and I think the former chair of the board, Sandy Riley, made it quite clear that it wasn't just a question when he and the other

people—other members of the board resigned that one of the most important questions, it wasn't—it was a question of whether Hydro would even be able to continue to exist because of the massive debt liabilities that were being imposed on it by the government.

And to—for the government to wash its hands of it and say, well, this is not something—we're not interested in a bailout while still taking \$400 million or more every year out of the—out of Hydro is an incredibly serious—is a colossal failure because the result is that Manitobans are going to be facing significant rate increases through Hydro which, in effect, are a hidden tax because the money that is being taken from Hydro is being used to pad the current budget and really—and we're having to pay through it—pay for it through increases to Hydro rates which are fundamentally one of Manitoba's advantages as far as an economic advantage. The fact that we have low energy rates are incredibly important for the ability of—to attract companies. There are mining companies who said that we're concerned about the huge increases.

\* (15:10)

But on a—to the North, but—the huge—there's also a colossal impact on seniors, live in rural areas where there are no natural gas pipelines. There is no option for them to be able—or for them to be able to switch, or—and the member from Kewatinook, I've spent some time up in St. Theresa Point, where there are people who have bills for \$1,000 a month. And that under the compounding increases that Hydro was proposing, you could see absolutely colossal increases and hundreds of thousands of dollars being extracted from communities.

So, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I will move on.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Thank you very much, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity.

This government was elected on what turned out to be false pretenses, so we should not be at all surprised that the budget implementation bill that I am speaking to this afternoon continues the history of deception and a radical conservative agenda now under way in Manitoba, in stark contrast to what the governing political party promised Manitobans, back in the 'nass'—in the last election.

To briefly recap, we had the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the current Premier

(Mr. Pallister), saying over and over and over again that if given the opportunity, he would wave a magic wand and balance the Province's books without any cuts to public programs and without any layoffs. And Manitobans, through no fault of their own, accepted this premise at face value in large enough numbers that he was indeed given the opportunity to find that magic wand and to wave it about, all Harry Potter-esque, and magically make the hippogriff arrive and all would be well in the world.

And, lo and behold, Manitobans are now learning the hard way that what the Premier and every single Conservative MLA in this Chamber said during the election was not true. Those of us who have been around long enough kind of suspected that that was the case at the time. We have seen this pony show before and I regret to say that we have been proven correct yet again.

This, quite simply, has been a bait and switch government. Bait and switch, of course, a famous tool—or infamous tool, I should say—used by less progressive, less honest persons, where they will advertise a product or a service. They will make outrageous claims just to get you into their store and then, lo and behold, the item that they had said would be on magical display at a rock bottom price—no longer available, you know. Who'd have thought, it's just not in stock but, geez, you're here, you're here in our store now; perhaps we can interest you in some health care cuts. Or maybe you'd like to pay an enormous amount more for your kids' post-secondary education. Or maybe we should make absolutely no progress whatsoever on the climate crisis, or the meth crisis, the addictions crisis, the homeless crisis. Maybe none of those things that were mentioned in our election platform are what we're actually going to do.

So BITSA is a bait-and-switch piece of legislation, which continues from the original bait-and-switch premise that this government used to get itself elected in the eyes of Manitobans. Manitobans, let us be absolutely clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans did not vote for massive cuts and massive layoffs to the Province of Manitoba. They never voted for that, they did not ask for that. In fact, they were told that that specifically is what would not happen, and this government has gone and done the exact opposite.

So here is the next question: if it was a bait and switch in round one, if there was a hidden agenda from day one dating back to the last election, what is

the hidden agenda this time? Because you know there is one. You know it is coming. And we can see from this government's behaviour, they are not governing in the interests of Manitobans. They never have, not from day one. And there are several examples that I can go through just off the top of my head which proves this to be the case.

For instance, if you actually cared about the well-being of all of your citizens, what would you do—logically—let's pretend, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that you are actually in a position to make decisions. Let's pretend Manitobans actually have an opportunity to contemplate this question. Let's say that you have an opportunity to partner with another level of government in a way that will bring hundreds of millions of additional dollars to your province so that you can make important investments in mental health and health care in Manitoba.

If you are a government which actually cared about the well-being of your citizens, what would you do? You would sit down with that level of government, you would hammer out an agreement, you would thank them very much for making their contribution to Manitoba, same as they are doing in every other province and you would implement programs that would get at the prevention, that would get at the solutions, that would get at the root causes of the problems that people face in health care. You would improve health-care services.

But this government has not done that, have they? They have staunchly refused to accept additional money from the federal government and meanwhile we have an addictions crisis amplified by the incredibly destructive power of the relatively new drug of crystal meth on top of the opioid crisis which is also underway and yet this government is flatly refusing to accept funds from another level of government to improve the welfare of their citizens. Who does that? Who does that, Mr. Acting Speaker? And it is not just on health care. I wish it was just on health care, but it's not.

There's also housing. There is a multi-billion dollar housing program available from the federal government. More than half of the provinces and territories, as I understand it, have already signed on to this plan. They're already building more affordable housing, they are building more shelters, they're building more low-income and social housing, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. And what is this government doing? They have refused to sign onto the deal at all. There is no money flowing in

Manitoba. The government has gotten so desperate in trying to claim any fig leaf of an imagination that they have done something on housing, they're trying to claim that they built housing units that were started before they were even elected to office.

We have the current Finance Minister—when he was in his previous role as the Housing Minister—claiming that the new apartment block at the University of Winnipeg, that that was something his government had built. Well, I had to table a photo from that event—the sod-turning event which I was honoured to attend because the University of Winnipeg is in my constituency. I pointed out the date. The date was before the last provincial election. That minister wasn't even an MLA; he was a city councillor.

He had absolutely nothing to do with getting that project built and unfortunately, even more tragically, he and his government have had absolutely nothing to do with building any more affordable and social housing in Manitoba since. In fact the situation has gotten far worse and members opposite would be wise to take note of this because affordable housing is a crisis that goes into every constituency.

The gentleman from Southdale can chirp all he wants. There are people living in Southdale who are low income, there are people in Southdale and St. Vital and in all parts of Manitoba who live in poverty and who deserve to have a safe and affordable and stable place to live.

\* (15:20)

This government has a moral obligation, if it actually cared about its citizens, to provide housing for those citizens, but they do not share that morality, Mr. Acting Speaker. They do not share that moral objective, that moral code that they actually must as government protect their citizens and help improve their lives wherever possible. They have sold social housing buildings, they have sold social housing apartments, they have increased the cost of living in social housing, they have decreased the money that is available to people on Rent Assist. They have cancelled just recently programs that used to help everyone from a rooming house owner, to an apartment block owner, to a low-income senior living in their own home in their neighbourhood.

There was small amounts of money available at the community level where these owners, these building owners, would be able to cost share improvements to their property which helps

everyone in the neighbourhood. When someone can fix up their property and improve it, the whole neighbourhood benefits. It's one of the best things you can do to help stabilize and improve a community. And what has this government done? They cut those programs.

I've had to talk to seniors over and over again living in various accommodations right now, who are wondering where they are going to live when these government cuts take effect. And it's not just in Wolseley, it's all over. So the government quite clearly is violating, not just a moral code, it's also violating the spirit of what it told Manitobans, that there would be no cuts to public services. Not true, not true, Mr. Acting Speaker. They knew full well that they were going to come in here and hack and slash the budget, that they were going to lay people off, that opportunity would go down, and misery would go up. That is the Conservative agenda in Manitoba, and it is on full display.

And, let's not forget that there are millions of dollars available from the federal government to help build more affordable housing, which this government is refusing to do. There are millions of dollars available from the federal government to help improve health care and mental health and addictions treatment in this government, and that's not happening either.

We also should recognize that child care—there's a national program to help support child-care spaces in Manitoba. And what's our situation here in Manitoba? Well, lo and behold, 18,000 children are now on just the official wait-list for a child-care spot in this province. Early childhood education is one of the most important places for a government to make investments in our future. Prenatal health is important. Right after birth, postnatal health—incredibly important. What's this government done for midwives in Manitoba? Holy cow, cancelled the program and then they were forced through public pressure to try and create something in its place. How's that been treating everybody?

And then we get into the child-care situation and 18,000 children on the wait-list, that's just the official number, Mr. Acting Speaker. Child care: another opportunity where there is money on the table and to the average Manitoban, to any Manitoban, this can't possibly make sense. They voted for a government, they voted for a political party, the majority of them did that said there would be no cuts, there would be no layoffs. And yet, here, all this government has

done is cuts and layoffs. They can't even accept money from another level of government which will help them do a job they should be doing already. That's why it is quite clear this is a bait-and-switch government and this is a bait-and-switch budget.

And of course, climate change would be yet another example where tens of millions of dollars are, again, available on the table from the federal government; \$67 million. This government promised 100 electric buses. You guys remember that promise? A hundred electric buses.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** How many do we have right now? We got zero. That's zero. We got four less than we used to have because this government mothballed the electric buses that used to be on the road in Manitoba. Those electric buses were made here in Manitoba. They were designed here in Manitoba. They were saving Winnipeg Transit thousands of dollars every single year because they are so much cheaper to operate.

Do Conservatives care about the environment?  
No.

Do they care about public transit? They care to cut it.

The Pallister government is just continuing and repeating history because when the Filmon government was in office, they cancelled the 50-50 funding agreement for operating costs, not just for Winnipeg Transit but for every single public transit system in Manitoba. That's where the Province is legally obligated, through its budget, through budget legislation like BITSA. The provincial government promised to cover half of the costs, half of the operating costs, for public transit in every community that had public transit in Manitoba.

What did Filmon do when he got to office? When the current Premier (Mr. Pallister) was Cabinet minister, what they'd do? They cancelled that program, wiped it out, left municipalities on their own. Rates went up, service declined, buses deteriorated, all the things we could expect.

So, when that agreement was restored by the NDP and then the Pallister government has another whack at it, what's one of the first things they cut? From a government that promised there would be no cuts, there would be no layoff, what's one of the first things they whack? They whack funding for public transit and now fees are higher in Winnipeg. People

reliant upon transit, people choosing to use transit, have to pay more. People in Brandon have fewer routes to choose from. There's just some service that's not available anymore because Brandon can't afford it after their provincial funding got whacked by this there-will-be-no-cuts-there-will-be-no-layoffs Pallister government.

And, an obvious solution is staring everyone right in the face: moving to electric buses, which drivers are fully onside with, which are way cheaper to operate, which would actually earn additional money for Manitoba Hydro, using their electricity rather than fossil fuels, would keep more money in Manitoba's economy rather than paying to import diesel fuel from elsewhere because we do not manufacture diesel fuel here. You could generate enormous saving from this, which, heaven forbid, could actually be used to lower rates, could actually be used to improve service.

That's not what Conservatives are about. If it's a public service, they have two goals for it: cut it and sell it. And I suspect that that will be the hidden agenda should Manitobans fail to learn from the most recent election and offer the Conservative Party of Manitoba yet another chance to make their lives worse. I believe we will see significant privatization of public services across the board.

All of these things, Mr. Acting Speaker, all of these areas I've just touched on—climate change, housing, health, mental health, child care—they're all things that any rational Manitoban would have done the exact opposite of what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his cohorts have done.

Rather than picking fights at every opportunity, rather than refusing to work with other levels of government, rather than ignoring the crises of the day—blaming the victims in some instances—they would have acted. They would have accessed the funds. They would have listened to the stakeholders and applied that money in smart ways that make a difference for people, in line with what front-line workers are telling us could be done and need to be done but have not been done. And that is a real tragedy, that this government is not actually interested in governing for the well-being of the citizens of this province. And we're just going to see more of that in the days ahead and in the years ahead.

Karma is an interesting creature. It has a way of biting you when you least expect it and here we have this spring, a government which is facing a massive

flood. Manitobans are facing a potentially massive flood. What did this government promise rural Manitobans? What'd they promise rural Manitobans when it comes to the ALUS program, the alternative land use survey program? There was going to be a comprehensive, province-wide ALUS program, which would actually pay landowners for the—*[interjection]*—would pay landowners for protecting the environmental services that may happen on their property, such as wetlands. Wetlands retain water on the land. We have lost, since this government took office, the equivalent of over 3,000 Olympic swimming pools' worth of water retention in Manitoba just from the loss of wetlands alone.

\* (15:30)

So, when we see this wall of water which may well strike our province again—another flood of the century. It would be our third one in what, two decades? But I'm sure climate change has nothing to do with it. Right, Mr. Premier? No, no; that couldn't possibly be a driving force.

But, if we do have that wall of water coming at us, imagine how much those wetlands that have been destroyed could have played a positive role if this government again had lived up to what it told Manitobans it was going to do.

They haven't done it, they had no intention of doing it, and they're not going to do it. That is the honest truth.

And I really feel for the young people in this province, all the kids whose parents would love to work, or be able to go to school, or upgrade their training but they can't because there's no child-care spot available for them, or children who are in the K-to-12 education system and even before the so-called reforms have hit the fan, as it were, we already are seeing massive cuts to the K-to-12 education system. We're seeing far fewer supports available in the classroom, far more work being placed on the backs of Manitoba's teachers, and that is not only not fair, it's not sustainable, and it's not smart.

And where was it in the Progressive Conservative platform in the last election where they wrote down we promise to raise everyone's tuition if you want to go to school? Where was that promise? I don't remember seeing that one. I didn't have anyone knock on my door, there wasn't any pamphlet in my mailbox, no one showed up and said yes, if you have kids that want to go to university or go to college, they're going to pay more for it and for no legitimate

reasons. It's just we don't like it when people can afford to go to school. We think universities should be more elitist. We think fewer people should have access to it. We think it should be more important how much money you have in your pocket than how smart you are, and that should determine who gets into university and who doesn't.

And that's what they've done—that's what they've done. Hundreds of dollars more every single year. University students and/or their parents, if university students are fortunate enough to have parents who can help them with their costs—hundreds of additional dollars every year that post-secondary students across this province have to pay because of the decisions of this government, which they did not honestly tell those students, or their parents, or Manitobans that that's what they were going to do.

And they've gone and done it, making post-secondary education less affordable, less accessible. And to top it all off, what did they cancel recently? The ACCESS programs for post-secondary education. If ever you wanted to be incredibly callous and obvious about how little you care about people who just happen to be born with less than a silver spoon in their mouth, what do you do? You cancel programs that help those people achieve the education they will likely need to be able to improve their lives, and that's what this callous government just did—bait and switch yet again.

Promise one thing; we've got a magic wand, we're going to wave it; all the problems will be solved without any cuts, without any layoffs, without any fee increases. And lo and behold, everyone's going to suffer except them.

So I really feel for the young people today who are in university doing their absolute best to make it through and for their parents who are doing the best that they can.

We also had a very successful and highly regarded income tax rebate for when people graduated from university as a way to encourage people to stay here. University students or college students—didn't matter; you'd be able to get 10 per cent of your tuition back in a year for six years in a row.

Now imagine how much of an incentive, how much of a benefit that would be, especially given how much more tuition costs now, thanks to this government. Where did they put that in their election brochure, Mr. Acting Speaker? We will wipe out the

opportunity for your son or your daughter to stay here in Manitoba and receive some of their tuition back as an encouragement to stay here in this fine province, to encourage them to stay here and start their career, start their family here. Where did they put that? Where was that in the election brochure? Wasn't there. Bait and switch all over again. A missing bit of honesty.

That rebate was worth over \$50 million a year to almost 50,000 people. That is not an insignificant amount of money; that can be life-changing money when you have just graduated and if you have student loans or if you are just starting out or if you are an entrepreneur, you are starting your own business or you are trying to find your own place to live, whatever the case may be, that money can be a real difference maker for a young person and that advantage is now gone—gone under the Pallister government.

And with the five minutes that I have left, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to continue my thoughts with the younger generations when I talk about the incredible harm that this government is causing them, not just through their inaction on the planetary collapse that is so evident, but in their many actions that they have already taken which are making our environmental health worse than it is already.

Climate change is the single largest challenge our species has ever faced. This is the scientific consensus, widely accepted—denied in Conservative caucus circles, of course—but you can't run from the laws of physics and the laws of chemistry. You can deny them if you want, but it is not going to end well. And that is where my concern for today's young people rest most harshly.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made it very clear that if we as a species are going to avoid cooking our own planet, cooking our own home, we must cut our emissions in half in the next 11 years, by the year 2030. And after that, 20 years after that, we have to be carbon neutral. This government is in denial of those basic facts just as they are equally in denial that here in Manitoba where almost all of our electricity is created without generating fossil fuels, we have incredible opportunities to create thousands of new jobs for that younger generation so they can go out and fix the mistakes of the past.

We have the ability to support and transition existing jobs so that the same industries can survive and thrive but operate in a different way that is so

much more gentler on our badly damaged planet. We have opportunities in Manitoba to save individual Manitobans and individual businesses and individual institutions millions of dollars a year through pursuing greater efficiency and yet what has this government done? I mentioned the cuts to public transit.

Obviously, when you make transit more expensive, more difficult, less reliable, that is not a good way to reduce your transportation emissions. Obviously, when you refuse to help transit fleets switch over to a locally made green alternative such as electric buses, that is not going to make the situation any better.

But they have gone even farther than that, Mr. Acting Speaker. They froze all of the Power Smart programs under yet another promise that has not happened, something called Efficiency Manitoba was going to take over.

Well, it hasn't quite done that yet, has it? It has been three years and counting and lo and behold, all that this government has accomplished is they took good programs that were helping Manitoba companies and individuals save money and help save the planet, and they went so far as to say to Power Smart employees, not only are we not going to tell you how these changes affect your future, we are not even going to let you advertise your programs anymore.

They went so far as to order a worker to paint over the Power Smart logo on the Manitoba Hydro mural at Portage and St. James Street. That's not helping our cause, Mr. Acting Speaker.

\* (15:40)

And they've denied and denied and delayed and delayed any serious effort to reduce climate emissions in Manitoba. We are at 21 million tons per year, just under that. It's where we've been the last three or four years in a row. That number has to be cut in half.

And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his ministers need to be obligated to provide a plan that is based on climate science, that will meet that timeline, and will do it in a way that causes the least amount of disruption possible and provides the maximum amount of gain and opportunities for Manitobans across this province.

Because the lives of our children are literally what's at stake. The lives of our grandchildren are at

stake. And if we fail in a developed and progressive place here—

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

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, Manitoba, I'd like to comment a little bit on this bill which, sadly, is misguided.

Let me talk first of all about the election finances changes. The government will do away with the rebates, that, clearly, a major reason for this is that it will decrease the attention that is paid to election expenses by—in audits.

That this government wants less scrutiny if there is no public money involved in the election, there will be less concern by people at Elections Manitoba to audit this as carefully; as long as there is some public money involved in rebates, then there will clearly be a need for very careful auditing and very careful attention because, in fact, the people are benefitting from public money.

We have seen what has happened in the past: the former Tory Cabinet minister who got caught out when he was audited. That was a number of years ago. We want to make sure that we have good, strong audits because we've seen in the past how Conservatives have tried to get away with spending in ways that they shouldn't be spending.

We want to make sure that this government is not trying to loosen the audits or decrease the care with which the audits are 'doing', by getting away from government support for financing.

This government is misguided; it's a time and a day when there should be more attention to how people spend during election periods and not less and, clearly, in our Liberal view, this government is going in the wrong direction.

On the PST, which is an important part of this government's bill, as the government would see it, what I'd like to point out to Manitobans is that every penny that that government is reducing in terms of PST is giving money to Manitobans. Every penny that this government is giving to Manitobans by reducing the PST is borrowed, every penny.

The 'bovernment' doesn't have a balanced budget. It's not predicting a balanced budget. They are ahead of themselves in terms of reducing the PST because they should not be involved in such financial mismanagement as to reduce the PST with borrowed money.

This is a mistake. It is not good financial management. The Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) should be ashamed of themselves for trying to buy an election by reducing the PST using borrowed money. The sad thing is that in a different way, this is the sort of thing that the NDP have tried to do with elections before: borrow money and spend it in order to win elections. The government is no better than the former NDP government.

Indeed, this government is really desperate. Not only are they borrowing money to reduce the PST, but they are so desperate to try and get their own message out to Manitobans without telling them about—that they actually borrowing money to do it, that they are spending \$180,000 to advertise the reduction in the PST.

As was pointed out in editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press today, this is a misguided attempt to try and win an election using government advertising. It's the sort of thing that the rules around elections were changed to have a set election date, to have an election date in which leading up to the election for 90 days, there was to be no more government advertising to try and sway the electorate.

The government has deep pockets—particularly when it borrows, so the government has borrowed \$180,000 in order to advertise that it's cutting the PST. How many Manitobans would be happy that this government is borrowing money to use it to 'placantly' advertise and try and promote their own interests in the days leading up to an election that they want to call early before Manitobans wake up to what is really happening.

This government has a vision. That vision is to decrease the PST using borrowed money to buy an election; it is a vision of less funding for infrastructure. We have heard this from all across the province; we have talked to municipalities, we have talked to First Nations, we have talked to people in Winnipeg, and this cutback in infrastructure funding is a major problem.

It didn't have to be this way. This government could have co-operated and partnered with the federal government which was ready, and did put, a lot of money on the table, but this government decided that they didn't want to partner with anybody else. They wanted to create a conflict with other levels of government because they think somehow that that will get them more attention, and so we're in a situation where our infrastructure is deteriorating.

And as I heard from people in—around the province that the problem with this government's approach is that if you don't consistently and well-fund infrastructure, that your infrastructure deteriorates. Instead of a \$100,000 job to fix the street in Winnipeg, that street will deteriorate to the point that the same street will have to have huge changes and improvement in the core infrastructure before you can start repaving it, and instead of \$100,000, that same street will now cost \$1 million.

This government is putting on future Manitobans big costs because it's not attending to infrastructure now, not doing things when they could be done for less cost. Chris Lorenc with the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association has been a leader in pointing this out, but I have heard it from so many other people that it hammers home the point of the importance of investing in infrastructure before it deteriorates to the point where you have to spend much, much more dollars in order to fix the problem.

\* (15:50)

We have a failure to partner not only with the federal government but a failure to partner with municipal governments. This is the vision of this Pallister government, to create conflicts with other governments, whether it is the federal government, whether it is the municipal government in Winnipeg or other rural municipalities.

It is interesting to see the letters that are coming in from municipal governments to us with their concerns about the way that this government is failing to listening to their needs and failing to pay attention to the basic infrastructure, the basic financial infrastructure of municipalities and the basic well-being of our communities.

We hear of problems with this government in partnering with First Nation and Inuit governments. A few weeks ago, I was in St. Theresa Point and there was a good example of the poor vision of this government. In St. Theresa Point there has been, in the past, a road—an ice road from St. Theresa Point to Garden Hill, and another one from Wasagamack to Garden Hill.

The result is that people in Garden Hill can get, in the past, their trucks and their goods for the winter on this ice road. But instead of paying, you know, probably thirty, fifty thousand dollars to help make sure that those ice roads are there this year—why, instead of even investing a little more to put a winter road around the edge of the Island Lake so that you

have a quick-as-possible road going to Garden Hill, what is happening now is that truckers coming into the Garden Hill First Nation have to go a very long way around.

It is such a long way around that for each truck coming into Garden Hill, that is \$3,500 extra. And when you add that up over the course of a winter season, we are talking \$500,000, \$600,000, \$700,000 which is lost—which the Garden Hill First Nation have to pay extra because this government failed to put in \$30,000 or whatever it takes to make that shorter route from St. Theresa Point to Garden Hill.

We were fortunate that the federal government helped the people in St. Theresa Point by ensuring that there was a winter road coming from Berens River north to St. Theresa Point. That, at least, is a much shorter route than the road—winter road which was built by this government which went from St. Theresa Point to Norway House and then all the way around on Highway 6. That was an extra five or six hours that people would have to travel, and that would be costing a lot extra.

But thankfully the federal government came to the help of people in St. Theresa Point, and there has at least been some improvement in terms of access this winter. It should be noted that only two years ago the Province had funded and supported that road from St. Theresa Point to Berens River.

With the Metis government, this government again is creating conflict on Hydro, in many other areas, tearing up previous agreements, not respecting other governments like the Metis government and the Manitoba Metis Federation here in our province.

It is a sad state of affairs when you have a government which has a vision to decrease the PST using borrowed money to buy an election, decreased funding on infrastructure so that things can crumble and the dollars have to be spent by governments and people in the future—the next generation. And a government which is dead set on creating as much conflict as it can with the federal government, the municipal governments, and with the First Nation and Metis governments.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that instead of this vision, Manitoba Liberals have an alternate vision: a vision to modernize our economy by investing in that infrastructure and that innovation which is needed to move our province forward; a vision to work co-operatively with the federal and municipal and First Nation and Metis governments on infrastructure, on

child care, on transit—move our 'frovince' forward because we have so much potential; a vision to establish a Manitoba business development bank to help small business access the capital they need to grow and to employ people. This is a very different vision than what we see from the Pallister government. And that's why we need to change this government.

The Pallister government's approach to climate change is difficult for most people to understand. The Pallister government came in initially quite supportive and then did a complete flip-flop. They gutted two thirds of their own bill. They essentially cancelled a made-in-Manitoba approach to climate change. And we are left with a government which has lost its leadership, which is floundering in the dark when it comes to climate change at a time when we need leadership.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

It is the Liberal view that we need to have a vision, and we have one for a transition from a fossil fuel- to an electricity-based economy. We have an advantage in electricity with our hydroelectric power. We need to be leading the transition to an electricity-based economy, rather than falling behind. We need to help Manitoba prepare for the future. We need to help globally to save our planet.

I was, in late January, in Kenya, and it was amazing to see there the pictures that had been produced by young Kenyan students. And here they were, picture after picture, talking about the need to save the planet. It was just enough to blow a person away. Just amazing, the dedication, the interest that they have and it's fascinating that the Kenyan government has realized the importance of being able to store carbon in trees.

And so they have brought in strict rules against cutting trees, they have engaged and are engaging in major programs to enhance and renew and restore forests and to create jobs. It is a vision which is forward thinking. And to imagine that a government in Kenya is taking these steps to address climate change, that it's got students there who are so excited and passionate in saving our planet.

In Manitoba, we have young people who are similarly passionate and enthusiastic. We saw quite a number of them recently coming to the Legislature with lots of signs and lots of passion, talking about the need to save our planet, to make sure that we reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the

atmosphere. They were amazing. And one of those students was my granddaughter, Grace. And she was right in among everybody else and just cheering and clapping and totally excited to be there.

And, Madam Speaker, just to think that this is not happening just here, it is happening all around the world and is stimulated by a movement of young people who are thinking of the future, who are progressive, who are concerned about where our planet is going and what is happening. It is so exciting to see young people engaged, concerned and ready to push all of us to save our planet.

\* (16:00)

When it comes to education, we need to have a future and a vision for education in Manitoba. Education is so important in a modern economy, and that's not just students in K to 12. Of course, includes post-secondary education and even more than that, it includes continuing learning throughout our lifespan.

We are in a world which is changing, where technology is moving fast, where a lot is happening, and we need to be able to be sure that people in Manitoba have those opportunities, that they are ready if one job, for whatever reason is no more because of the change, that they have the opportunities to get the learning, to get the education that they can move into something else where there is a real need.

There is an incredible opportunity, and it is exciting to see young people talking not just about getting a job, but about starting a business and creating jobs, to hear and see young people talk about the potential.

We had a meeting with a group of post-secondary students and a couple of them were right out in front. They are building, and they are building so that they can build the economy of Manitoba, the jobs in Manitoba. It is just so exciting to see the passion of those young people, and to see their enthusiasm and their potential and to see the students who came here from other parts of the world, who came to Manitoba because they thought there was tremendous opportunities here, and there are.

But this government—they told us this government has cut back on the health-care programs for students who are international; it has raised the tuition for international students. It has forgotten how important international students are to all of us in Manitoba, that many of them stay here and

contribute to our economy and that while they are here, they are making a contribution—some of them are graduate students and those graduate students are doing research which is leading to new discoveries, which is leading to new products and services, new ideas for things which can be done on the Internet in a computer technology-based world. It is exciting to see the potential from the interaction with students who have come from Africa and Asia and Europe and South America and are all here and ready to get involved and excited and be there to contribute.

But we need to make sure that we have a vision of the excitement of education, a vision which includes ensuring that our system of education is innovative, that it's excellent, that it's connected to our communities.

We need local input and community-based decision making with local school boards instead of getting rid of all the school boards as this government is threatening to do. We need to have schools which address inclusion and diversity, provide adequate help for those with learning disabilities. I have talked to so many children and so many adults with learning disabilities who struggle—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I am having some difficulty hearing the member that is speaking in debate, so I would ask for everybody's co-operation please to bring down the level of chatter in the House.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I have talked with and met with so many young people and adults who struggle with learning disabilities and had a very difficult time in school—in primary and secondary school—and some of them fought through these challenges and have gone on to amazing careers as engineers, as doctors, as politicians, as creative people who have learned how to address challenges and to overcome them. And so one of the things that we need to do is when we see people who have learning disabilities, make sure that they are being helped.

I will tell the story of one young lad who had a lot of difficulty in school. He was told that he was never going to make it anywhere because he was dumb. He was put back a grade at one time. He had difficulty believing in himself. He finally got through grade 12, found that university wasn't working for him and got out and got a job. He was writing, and selling, and marketing; advertising in magazines.

And then after a while, he got married and decided that he was going to try and go back to

school. And he did and he succeeded, and he applied to and got into medical school, and he has now completed a residency and he is making an amazing contribution as a physician who knows what he has to do as a doctor but who has also learned about computers and the Internet. So he's working at this interphase of health care and computers and the Internet and trying to build a better way—a better system for health care for all of us.

It's amazing that he was, as a boy, written off. And yet somehow he made it through and what he's doing now is just incredible and amazing. So we need to be looking out for kids who have learning problems but we need to be helping them make sure that they are getting the support they need because they can be tremendous contributors to society. And without that help, they may struggle a lifetime and—you know, have difficulties—a lifetime for themselves and sometimes for others.

We need to have a vision not just for education and our economy, but for health care. We need to recognize where things are being done in an excellent way. The Misericordia urgent care, the Corydon Primary Care Clinic, the mature women's health centre, the lactation consultants, these were all things that worked well, were excellent, and have been destroyed, decimated, got rid of by this government for reasons which are still not clear.

We need to build and recognize that these are centres where there was excellent care and that these can be models. We have a facility, an incredible facility in CancerCare Manitoba—credible operation, but they are being thrust into problems at the moment by cutbacks in this government and cutbacks in the health-care system so that people are being referred late and unable to get the treatment that they should have.

I had an email this morning about a woman who passed away—I think it was 1 a.m. this morning—and she had initially come in for help in June of last year, and she didn't get the operation on her cancer until almost the end of the year in late December, and by that time it had grown. It had grown to the point that it had invaded nearby tissue, and although efforts were made in surgery and treatment to help her, it was too late because the cancer wasn't caught early enough.

And she is not the only one. I brought forward the case earlier this year of George Myer, and there are others—too many to speak of and too sad a situation when cancer could have been caught much

earlier but wasn't because of the problems, the delays which are happening because of cutbacks.

\* (16:10)

We need to be proactive in addressing conditions like diabetes, reducing poverty to keep people healthier. These things can be accomplished. This is our vision as Liberals. And, indeed, this will save, as we move forward on health-care costs, so that dollars can be directed to areas of need.

And we clearly need to be doing far better on mental health and addictions. It is beyond belief that this government waited almost three years to sign an agreement with the federal government to get funding for mental health and addictions. It is an area, as we know all too well, all of us, that we have what some call a meth epidemic or a meth crisis, what others saying is a crisis of trauma, that people are getting traumatized for one reason or another and they're resorting to using meth.

But, whatever the cause, we need to be addressing this. We should've been addressed it in 2017 when it started exploding. And even today we are not doing anywhere near enough to make sure that the hope is there for people who are addicted, that the effort to prevent people from using meth in the first place is being made.

We could have a much better Manitoba. And that is why we disagree so strongly with so much of what this government is doing, and that is why we as Liberals believe it is time for a Liberal government in our province.

Merci.

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** It gives me great pleasure to stand up here today and stand up for Manitobans and stand up against this austerity government that continues to cut, cut, cut at the expense of our services here in Manitoba.

I know that members across the way don't know what it's like to live in poverty, to know what it's like to worry about paying \$2.85 to get on a bus, to worry what it's like to get into social housing because they can't afford to pay high rents or even to get their children into daycare.

You know, it's—I invite the members opposite to come and spend a week in one of our social housing buildings in the North End, in my constituency, and see actually what it's like to live in poverty, to live in conditions where this government cut 62 per cent of maintenance to these buildings in the community that

I represent. That means that people are living in social housing where there's bed bugs because this government decides that they don't want to spray, that they want to cost and save money at the expense of children, Madam Speaker. Kids are going to school with bite marks on them because this government doesn't care about Manitobans, Manitobans that are—[interjection]—struggling to make ends meet.

And the member from Fort Richmond, I can hear her speaking, and maybe she'll get up later and talk about her constituents and their struggle, if she's listening, because everyone's struggling right across this province in every corner of this province, with meth—meth, Madam Speaker. Families are being torn apart. People are struggling. They can't get into treatment centres, while this government does nothing. They sit on their hands and they claim to have a plan.

Well, Madam Speaker, I tell you, Main Street Project—25,000 people are struggling with meth in this province, and they say that this government has no plan. Our mayor of Winnipeg even says that this government has no plan on tackling meth and helping Manitobans get off of meth, helping families who are struggling to support their loved ones who are on meth.

Madam Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, the member from St. Johns and I met with family members whose loved ones were struggling with meth, and it was hard to listen to these families crying and shedding tears and asking for help, begging for help. But we're not in government. This is who is in government, and do they come and listen to these family members? Are they doing anything to help these family members?

They're doing absolutely nothing while people die, while people are being victimized, they're being assaulted, while nurses are struggling in hospitals and security guards are being accosted because this government has no plan to support people who are struggling with meth.

Meth kills people. Meth puts people into psychosis. There was recently a person that was just outside of my riding that—he set—he went with a knife and held a woman at gunpoint—or, at knifepoint and forced her to drive him to the Hartford Police Station. He was on meth, Madam Speaker. You know why he did that? Because he wanted help but there was nowhere to get help, so his only alternative was to commit a crime so that he could put—get put in jail so that he would get the help he needed.

Is that the kind of province that we want to live in, that we're going to police ourselves out of this, you know, meth crisis that we're in, where people are struggling with addiction and their only alternative is to commit a crime to go to jail to get the help they need? Is that what this province is supporting? Because that's what's happening.

That's not the first one. There was recently a man who set himself on fire because he was in a meth psychosis. Set himself on fire, Madam Speaker. Who does that? Someone who's on meth that wants help, that needs help, that has been crying out and asking for help. But does this government listen? No.

People are going to these lengths to hurt themselves, to end their lives because they have no hope because there's no help, because this Province is failing to provide the necessary resources to help these families, Madam Speaker.

When we were meeting with these families—and there was five families that we met with—one, her daughter had been struggling with meth since she was 15 years old and she had come to live with her and she was knocking on other people's doors, looking in their houses or their apartments and just doing stuff when she was in that psychosis mode. And they ended up kicking—telling her, if your daughter doesn't leave, we're going to kick you both out. And this was in social housing. She was a student going to school to be a social worker and she needed that housing for her other kids. So she had no alternative but to send her daughter on the streets, to go be homeless because she had knocked on so many doors asking for so much help but there was no help.

She went to the Health Sciences Centre; there's six beds, apparently. Well, she was told that there's no beds here for you. We don't have any help for long-term care. Try another door. Then she went to AFM, same thing. You need this letter to get into there. So she went to the doctor, she got a letter. She had to actually get a 'toxology' report done on her daughter. So she went and she did that and then she went back for the report, and then the doctor said, well we can't give you the report. Come back and see this person.

This woman spent almost two years of her life while going to school to be a social worker trying to support her daughter to get her daughter into treatment off of meth. And her daughter is still homeless today and she's still trying to help her. Two years, Madam Speaker. This government's been in government for three years now.

This crisis, you know, in the last two years, has went way beyond what people are able to access in terms of supports because they've provided none. There's no new beds at AFM. There's no new treatment beds for anyone to go into. And they talk about the RAAM clinics. Wow, 10 hours a week open. You know what? Those are only for people struggling with opioid. What about those that are struggling with meth? Where do they go?

This government has no plan on that because they don't care. They haven't had to worry about having someone obviously struggling with meth. Or, if they have, they've stayed silent on it and they haven't asked their government to step up and do something about it.

This other family that we met with, this woman, her brother who, you know, was a roofer, he owned his own business, he was a contributing member of society, he was doing really well and for some reason, his business started to dwindle and he got very depressed and he started using drugs, and he ended up using meth. And that young man, he almost killed his parents—his mom and dad.

\* (16:20)

Can you imagine? Like, I would never, ever raise my hand to my parents. And that sister shared with us, her brother never, ever, ever raised his hand to his parents, but when he became addicted to drugs, he became someone else, someone that they didn't recognize, someone that they were scared to be around. He would talk to people that weren't even there; he would start—he was hiding weapons, and you know, he ended up beating the living daylight—they couldn't even recognize their own mother. She had a shattered pelvis. She had to learn how to walk. She was in the hospital for almost a year, and then when she got out which was just in February, there was no services for her at home.

Can you imagine going home and not having someone to come and provide home care for you? Well, that's what this government has done. They've dismantled the services that were there to support Manitobans: \$120 million, Madam Speaker. Can you imagine how much health care you can provide to Manitobans? Not only that, they underspent last year by \$250 million in health care. You know, and I was in this House when they announced the 1 per cent PST reduction, and, you know, they—the Minister for Finance had said that that's the No. 1 priority for Manitobans. Well, I can tell him today that the Manitobans that I've spoken to and that we've spoken

to on this side say the No. 1 priority in Manitoba is health care. They want quality health care when they need it and in their community when—where they need it.

You know, the whole northwest and northeast corner of the city is no longer going to have emergency room. No emergency rooms in either of those corners of the city. I can't imagine not having an emergency room in my community. I have to get on a bus, which people in my riding don't have the money to get on a bus, and if you're experiencing, you know, life-threatening, you know, injuries and you have to go in an ambulance and you get there, who knows how long you're going to wait?

They claim that wait times have gone down, well, there was just a report released. They've gone up, up, up, and this government claims to say that health care is better in this province, better than it's ever been. Well, I don't know where they access their health care because they're certainly not accessing the public health care here because if they have gone to Health Sciences Centre and they walked in there, if they've gone to Children's Emergency and they have walked in there, they would see the amount of people waiting.

In my riding, I had a call, not—I think about four calls we had from people visiting Seven Oaks emergency room and they said there was 29 people in the back and they said there was probably as much waiting in the waiting room and people were getting up and asking, you know, how long? And at one point, a doctor came out and he announced to everyone, he said, we are 35 per cent over capacity. We can't take any more patients. All of our beds, all of our rooms are filled; you know, people are sitting in the hallway. There's nowhere for anybody else to go, and we don't know how long it's going to be for us to even see those patients.

So the other 30 people that were waiting out in the waiting room, you know what they were told? They were told, if it's not an emergency, go see your general practitioner; go to a walk-in clinic; and if it's an emergency, get in your car or we can call you an ambulance and we'll send you to a different hospital. Well, Madam Speaker, how is that going to be possible if there's no hospitals in the northwest or northeast corner to even go to?

Now you're putting even more stress onto the Health Sciences Centre when they've already—they're over capacity. They have no more beds; they have no more room. If you've ever gone in there, there's

people standing because there's nowhere to sit. So—and this government seems to think that, you know, less is more. I don't know what Kool-Aid they're drinking, but, obviously, it's not good Kool-Aid because Manitobans want the quality health care in their communities when they need it and, you know, this government doesn't care.

They—maybe they can afford, you know, private health care, but I can tell you not every Manitoban can afford that. Not every Manitoban can afford to go to Aurora treatment centre to get support for an addiction. You know how much it costs? I actually just met with someone that went to a treatment; \$28,000 a family paid. They actually mortgaged their house to send their child to Aurora to get treatment.

And you know how long she stayed there? Six months. Because when you're on meth, for you to feel good about yourself, to have hope, to get that serotonin level back into your brain that helps you feel good, it takes a 'mimum' of six months. And what does this government offer for treatment? Twenty-eight days as a max. Twenty-eight days.

Well, I can tell you, and I've talked to other people too, that have gone to treatment for 28 days. And they've gone back to using meth within three weeks of being out of treatment. You want to know why? Because their serotonin levels don't help them feel good. They feel bad; they don't have hope, they feel like life is ending, that they're better off dead. Do we want to, you know, live in a province where people feel bad about themselves, that they don't feel like they have the services that this government should be providing?

These are Manitobans as well. They may be struggling with addictions, but they're someone's loved one, and they deserve the same amount of care as anybody else would get, whether it was struggling with alcohol or whatnot.

I recently, again, visited Main Street Project, because I support the work that they do. They're, you know, they're doing above and beyond what this Province supports them to be able to do. And they're overwhelmed because they're having—they're seeing people that were addicted to alcohol now coming in addicted to meth. And it's because meth is cheaper and you get a longer high.

And, you know, it's a symptom of trauma. And they say—we see these people that are struggling and they need help. But this government isn't there to help them. How do we help these people when we don't have the resources?

You know, and some of these workers from Main Street Project, they're even driving out to Brandon to go and pick up people who want to get into treatment that are struggling, because they have no access to get to Winnipeg from Brandon. There's no services over there. There's no bus coming to Winnipeg, nothing.

You know, and what is this government doing? Nothing, they're just expecting that this is going to go away. Well, I can tell them it's not going to go away, it's just getting worse and worse. And if you listen to, you know, the Chief of Police Danny Smyth, you know, they're—the majority of their calls are about the violence that people are experiencing from meth.

And is this government listening? No. Are they worried about the safety of Manitobans? No. You know, are they trying to get Manitobans help? No.

You know, it's not going to get any better by ignoring it. It doesn't go away. These are people that need the supports. And, you know, I know there's—and I hope that there's people that care about, you know, people who are struggling, because there's a lot of them in Manitoba. And they're often voiceless and forgotten about. And just thought about as, that's not my problem, you know, my family isn't struggling with that, so why should I care about it?

Well, these—we should be caring about all Manitobans. You know, these are the people that we're elected to stand up for, to support, to make sure that there's the services there that they rely on. And, you know, this government continues to just pick, pick, pick, pick, pick away at every service.

You know, you come into the North End of Winnipeg; go to one of our women's centres. They've been cut to the extent where they're almost non-existing. They have no services to offer women who are being abused, for a government that says, oh, we stand up for women, and we stand up against violence, and we'll support women when they're experiencing domestic violence. No programs in the North End, and I can tell you that there's lots of violence in the North End. But is there services there? No, because this government cut it; \$120,000 just to one women's centre, North End—North Point Douglas Women's Centre.

\* (16:30)

That \$20,000, Madam Speaker, had a counsellor who would help women get to shelters that they needed. Had another counsellor that would help

women and support them in, you know, leaving those relationships when they are ready because women, you know, these are—they're fathers of their children so a lot of these women—and I know, you know, I've experienced this myself—they do not want to be hit; they love their partner but they need support and the men need support, too.

And what does this government do? Nothing. You know, they invest in a few programs but not enough to support, you know, the amount of people who are going through this. And I look at our North End Women's Centre; you know, thank goodness that they got some funding from private donors to be able to keep their women's shelter open because they cut the services there, the very services where women were able to go and seek shelter with their families, with their children to get away from the abuse. And this, you know, it's—these are just two programs and I can go on and on and on.

And, you know, we have the home renovation program that helps seniors stay in their homes and get the renovations that they needed but they cut that program. That program also helped families working—struggling families do renovations in their homes to help keep them in their homes, you know, families who might have bought a fixer-upper, Madam Speaker, because they couldn't afford, you know, a three, four thousand-dollar—\$400,000 new build.

You know, they bought a house that they knew they would have to fix up and they were working to fix up and they were getting some support. You know, this grant didn't pay a hundred per cent of it; they had to put in money, too and work hard to get that money. But this government thought, well, you know what, Manitobans should be able to renovate their own house, seniors should be able to do that work on a fixed income.

Well, I can tell the members opposite on that side that not everybody has that luxury; not everyone, you know, retires with a good pension. You know, there are families that rely on, you know, these programs to be able to, let's say, fix a leaky roof, you know, or help them from getting their house condemned because, you know, there is maybe windows that need to be fixed or something. But this government, I don't know why they just continue to just dismantle services that, you know, help the most marginalized people that need it.

You—I, at times, I sit in this House, Madam Speaker, and I am just like, I don't understand it. I

don't understand how people can operate and do the things they do to people who need it the most, that are not looking for a handout but are looking for a hand up; that need, you know, tuition that's affordable.

And, you know, the member from Point Douglas and I when we met with that family, they said, like, we looked into Aurora, we looked into private places where we could send our loved one but we can't afford it, we don't have the money, we are all working, we are all struggling, you know, we are just making ends meet, what do we do, you know, and we have had to take time off work to support our loved one.

That family I was telling you, that that mother, they did not even recognize her, she had to take off time from her work—six months, she's got off to be able to support her mom at home. And her mom had to learn how to walk again, she had to learn how to feed herself—both her arms were broken, like, the amount of violence that went into doing what her son did to her, you know, should give this government an indication of, what's going on? Like, what's going on, why are we allowing this to happen?

Why are we allowing people—and this feeds into our health-care system because the people who are on drugs end up having mental health issues. So where do they end up? They end up in our ERs, they end up in our psychiatric wards, they end up in Grace Hospital. You know, but it's unfortunate that, you know, they don't care. The member from Concordia and I just recently—maybe a month ago, or three weeks ago—we met with ACCESS students. You know, and Selkirk Avenue has become this hub of education and the reason it has become the hub of education is because people that live in the North End are struggling, they have been struggling for years.

You know, I grew up in the North End, single mom on welfare—that's still what's happening in the North End. There's still single moms, there's still, you know, families that are struggling to make ends meet, lots of families that are on EIA—welfare—that are going to school so that they can better their life, so they can get off welfare, so that they can show their kids a better tomorrow.

But does this government care? No. What did they do? They raised tuition. They raised tuition for the most marginalized people that can't even afford to pay tuition and they raise that.

These students we met with, these were students that were fighting to keep their ACCESS programs running, to keep the ACCESS bursaries in their community. These were bursaries that were about \$5,000 a speaker—Madam Speaker. Five thousand dollars, it would help. You know, with their tuition. That maybe would help with their cost of living, their books. Not a lot of money, you know. They weren't getting thousands of dollars. It was \$5,000, so it helped them for the full year to go to school. And what did this government do? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please. The noise level is starting to go up, and we do have a member speaking in debate.

**Mrs. Smith:** Miigwech, Madam Speaker, and I know it's hard for the members opposite to listen to all these, you know, effects that they've had on people that aren't, you know, positive ones. But I implore them to listen because these are Manitobans. These are people that matter. These are people that pay taxes, that contribute to Manitoba's economy, that, you know, are people that are just trying to make ends meet.

And so, when we were meeting with these students, they were telling us—and even the professors, they were saying we don't even know if we're going to be able to keep this program going in the North End because we don't know if we're going to have students that are going to be able to pay tuition to come to our centre.

And you know how hard that is for people to hear? That we can't do anything about it because this government isn't listening to us and that we've been fighting to keep tuition affordable, that we've been fighting to keep these bursaries, that we've been fighting to keep these programs going, but it falls on deaf ears because this government doesn't care. That they, you know, only care about money and money is always the bottom line with this government. It's money over people.

You know, when is this government going to start caring about Manitobans? When are they going to start caring about people who need help? You know, they claim to stand up and say, oh yes, we care about Manitobans—we're listening to Manitobans.

Well, I don't know who they're listening to but it's certainly not people in the North End.

And I know they don't represent Point Douglas constituency, but they are the government and they do represent all of Manitobans. So, you know, I say to them that they should start listening to all Manitobans.

Come for a visit to the North End—not just to go walk for, you know, 20 minutes, half an hour, take some pictures, you know, or to make an announcement at Andrews family centre. That really does nothing. But actually come and see the vibrancy. Come and see and visit the people in the North End.

You know, we have the Aboriginal Youth Opportunities group and that started because a group wanted to change what was being said about the North End. And these are youth that get together every Friday night. They come together.

And it's not just youth, Madam Speaker. There's elders there, there's like people from different communities. It's not people just from the North End. These are people that want to support youth, that want to support, you know, positive things that are being done and not just looking at all of the negative stuff that comes out of—that's portrayed about the North End.

We think about, you know, our seniors groups and we have a whole bunch of them—seniors associations, one of which, you know, was cut—their funding was cut by this government.

These seniors delivered food to seniors who couldn't get out of their homes. So they would get Winnipeg Harvest, they would come and get it delivered. They knew every senior in the north Point Douglas area's dietary restrictions, so they would base their care packages on that, and they would go and they would deliver food to these seniors that couldn't get out of their home.

But this government cut that funding that allowed those seniors to be able to do that work. And it wasn't a big amount of money. You know, it was one staff that was operating it and whole bunch of volunteers that did it. But it's hard to do that when you have limited resources, and it's getting harder and harder here in Manitoba with the limited resources that this government continues to provide to Manitobans.

\* (16:40)

You know, Manitobans are pretty smart people, and they can see right through what this government

is doing. You know, there—they want the services that they deserve. They know that the cuts that this government is making is creating chaos in our health-care system. They have heard it from the nurses, but they are not listening. You know, if they visited an ER, they would be able to see the chaos that has been created—and I do not know.

I just get so disappointed when I come and I hear, you know, what is being done in this House, and I wish someone would actually listen to Manitobans and start to care. And everyone is on their phone, not even listening because, you know, it is kind of frustrating in a place where you come and you talk about, you know, things that people are experiencing. Not everybody needs a handout, I get that, or a hand up, but the ones that do actually do not take it for granted; they work hard.

And, you know, this government needs to start recognizing that and start to actually not taking away the resources from the people that actually need it and not closing our ER rooms because, you know, you are just going to see even more chaos in our health-care system. And it is not fair to our doctors; it is not fair to the patients that go in the hospitals. You know, they deserve health care in an amount of time that is reasonable, and this government is just continuing to, you know, take those services away.

So, miigwech, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** Madam Speaker, it is always amazing how sometimes we make speeches in this Chamber and we want to express our thoughts in a more fluent and congruent manner wherein it should relate to a budget implementation act. It is very difficult for me because I cannot imagine the many words that I need to use in order to describe this desperate move on the part of a government that I do not think knows how to govern.

What I see is an ad hoc approach to the problems of the world, more specifically, of those who live in the areas that we call depressed economically. I represent portions of Tyndall Park that really are having it real hard. Tyndall Park is a middle-income. Socio-economically, it is also middle income, meaning they do not make as much money as those who live someplace else—I won't mention the areas. I also represent Weston and Brooklands, and soon enough I may have to represent Inkster Gardens and Meadows West and Waterford.

Now, those areas that I mentioned are being served by Seven Oaks—Seven Oaks General Hospital. And, if you haven't been there, I will tell you what it looks like because I do not think the Health Minister even knows where it is.

Seven Oaks is at the corner of Leila and McPhillips, it has been there since the '80s when it was first built and there were Seven Oaks General Hospital Foundation. It was a community-based hospital, and it was built in order to serve the northwest area of the city. And, because I live in that area and I also encourage my family to live in that area. I used to be at the Seven Oaks—the Genstar development, the Seven Oaks Crossings, they call it. And it's so near the Seven Oaks General Hospital that it was very convenient for me to just walk in, even during an emergency, which means that it was very convenient for those who live nearby.

But right now, what's happening is that a health minister who does not live in our area—he lives someplace else—decides that we don't need it anymore. I don't know his criteria for saying that, or I don't know why he's doing it, but when we are told that you don't need it anymore, I was suspicious because I don't know the real reason. I don't see the logic behind closing the emergency room of Seven Oaks hospital.

And just to tell you the truth about Seven Oaks General Hospital, the reason why it's called general hospital was because it provided the medical help that those guys, those who live at—from the Stonewall area, and even East St. Paul, they go to Seven Oaks. And closing it will mean—meaning closing the ER, if you want me to be very specific—means that we have to travel. My family may have to travel about 14 minutes and 37 seconds from the corner of McPhillips and Leila to the Health Sciences Centre. I tried it at 3 a.m., speeding at ambulance speed—which is about 70—and I still had to have 14 minutes and 37 seconds before I even reached William Avenue. And that's scary, because people sometimes don't have that much time.

Well, the Health Minister says we have ambulances. Yes, sure, we do, and I'm not even saying that we don't. We do. But sometimes those ambulances are occupied. Sometimes those ambulances have to come all the way from across the city because the ambulances that are in our area, in Tyndall Park and The Maples, are occupied otherwise. Or held up right there, inside the areas where ambulances come in and dislodge the patients

that they pick up from the streets, or from the homes; those who need it the most.

So it's scary. I'm not trying to fearmonger, because I know that it sounds like it. But 14 minutes and 37 seconds is about half of my speech for today. Which means that as I travel, if I were a patient, coming all the way from Leila and using McPhillips, and then turning left on William Avenue; 14 minutes and 37 seconds could mean life or death for some.

\* (16:50)

My time—when I was working at the Canada Revenue Agency as a validator, I was a clerk. And I had chest pains and there was also a jabbing pain right on my jaw, and I knew it was my heart. And I was thankful that if I should die, I was still working. So I drove myself from Stapon Road, down Regent, forgot that there was Concordia, went straight to St. Boniface. But, before I was able to reach St. Boniface, I was stuck on the bridge because there was a huge traffic jam right before you could turn left onto Archibald. It was really bad and I really felt bad. So I put my car on neutral. It was safer because I don't want to kill somebody if I should get a seizure right away. So it took me at least 25 minutes to get there, to the St. Boniface general hospital.

And it was scary at first because I cannot find parking. And it was stupid of me to have driven myself. I should have called for an ambulance. Would it have made any difference? I don't think so because the traffic jam at that time, at 3:30 in the afternoon, it was really scary. And, when I reached and couldn't find a parking spot at St. Boniface Hospital, I parked right where the ambulances do.

I went straight up and St. Boniface Hospital is a very world-class facility, and it is one of our prides. It should be always mentioned that our heart centre is among the best in the world, and people should realize that we should be thankful that we have the St. Boniface general hospital, that we have the heart centre in North America that's comparable to no one.

So, as soon as I got in with the orange thingy that they give you when you have chest pains, they said, you're lucky you got in. And on the same day, sometime during the night, they scheduled me for a stent, an angiogram and angioplasty at the same time. And I am always thankful to the doctors of St. Boniface Hospital for doing it. I'm still around. That's December 23rd, 2005. That's 14 years ago.

And I clearly remember, too, the second heart attack that I had, which was 2012. I was already here as a member of the Legislative Assembly for Tyndall Park. I said, how much will my wife get if I should croak today, and I chose to go back to St. Boniface Hospital. I, again, drove myself. Stupid me. And the doctor who attended to me at the emergency room said, we will take care of you, please relax, here's the oxygen and stuck a needle on my arm.

And I was happy. I was happy because this is Winnipeg. Winnipeg has about 800,000 people and when this—those emergency rooms at Concordia and St. Boniface and Misericordia and Victoria were closed, we almost forgot about one more. There's one more that they closed, right? Misericordia, Victoria. And they're closing Concordia and what else? They closed something else.

They chose—[interjection]—they chose to not proceed with the CancerCare additional beds and that was in 2016 when they said no, no, no, we are not going to proceed with that NDP project. Anything that has NDP on its front title, they won't do it. Why? Because it does not make sense?

I will tell you what makes sense. What makes sense is I drove as a volunteer for the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation. It makes sense that patients need to rest after radiation therapy and they do not have a place to go to. And for those patients who have been given radiation therapy—and when they climbed aboard my car, they said, I want to go home, but they needed a place to go to, they needed a place where they could rest. But then we deny them that, or not we—the Progressive Conservative government that came into power denied them that: a place where they could go to.

And it is part of the politics of health care. I see us as being not victimized but being sacrificed in the altar of budgets, balance, deficit. And what I see is a government that does not really care too much about people's safety, happiness and peace of mind. We have workers now who are working demoralized, overworked, overstaffed—no, understaffed—and they are overworked and tired.

And I do really need to speak a little bit longer because I have more to say about the politics of health care, but I yield my time.

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Point of Order**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), on a point of order.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business and in accordance with rule 2(9), I would like to table a list of one of the four bills designated by the official opposition for this Fourth Session of the 41st Legislature. Our designated bills for this session are Bill 10, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Health System Governance and Accountability). Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** It has just been announced by the honourable member for Concordia that the official opposition has indicated a bill that they are designating, and that is Bill 10, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Health System Governance and Accountability).

And I would just indicate it is technically not a point of order, but I recognize it as House business.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), to continue.  
*[interjection]*

**Mr. Marcelino:** Thank you for the applause.

The real honest-to-goodness message that I want to convey is that in the politics of health care there was that phrase that was used by somebody from the WRHA. He says those nurses and those health-care professionals are living in a valley of despair. No, they are not. They are not. They are used to change; they know how to deal with it. They know how to deal with change, but what they do not like is the way that change is being mandated, ordered and being used to clobber them.

It is not fair.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 13 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 1, 2019

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