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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
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FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	Ind.
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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
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MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
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PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
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SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
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SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
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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

Friday, March 8, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

International Women's Day

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, today, March 8th, marks International Women's Day in Manitoba and around the world.

On this day, people across the globe celebrate the hard-won, collective progress that we have made toward women's rights. Today is also an opportunity to reflect on the status of women in society and to reaffirm our commitments to advancing legal and economic equality for women and freedom from violence.

International Women's Day emerged from the women's organizing in the early 1900s, which led to improved working conditions in factories across North America and Europe. Women in Manitoba today continue to organize and work together within and across diverse movements, including those led by indigenous women, women of colour, women with disabilities, the LGBTQ* community, among others. They work on issues such as safety

and violence prevention, education, human rights, child care and many others. We are grateful for their passion and commitment to achieving equality in our province and beyond.

Madam Speaker, this year's international theme is think equal, build smart and innovate for change. In keeping with that theme, our Manitoba Women's Advisory Council is hosting an event this afternoon, discussing the importance of women's researchers. Enhancing the role of women in research is required to ensure that innovative approaches are considered.

One critical example of where the perspectives of women is important in research is in heart health. The most recent report from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada clearly outlines how the lack of women-led research has hindered the effectiveness of treatment for women. Because of a lack of research done on women, most people associate heart attacks with men. But cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death globally for both sexes, and women are more likely than men to die of a heart attack. We know that women experience different symptoms than men and that women require different treatment than men. There is much work to be done as we advance and break this glass ceiling in cardiovascular research.

I'm also inspired by the women currently involved in the research areas of agriculture, social science, engineering and the environment. The list goes on. We know that they are creating space for women to follow behind them.

I look forward to learning more about women in research at the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council event this afternoon starting at 4 p.m. at the hotel Fort Garry. Please join us in celebrating this year's International Women's Day and I invite all my colleagues to this special occasion later this afternoon.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Happy International Women's Day.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): International Women's Day is a day we recognize the strength, resiliency, courage, struggle and beauty of women and girls while firmly standing against misogyny and attacks on women that seek to render our voices, place and space invalid or in silence.

The path of women's liberation continues to be met with fierce resistance from within our homes, churches, streets, courts and legislatures across Canada.

So on this day I want to lay out what this Premier (Mr. Pallister), in concert with his ministers, have done to attack Manitoba women's health care and space since taking office.

Madam Speaker, they've cut lactation consultants; they closed the Mature Women's Centre; delayed the Women's Hospital; refused to raise the minimum wage, which disproportionately affects—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —women often forced to work one or two or three jobs in an attempt to make ends meet for their families; they—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —cut \$25,000 to the mobile breast cancer screening; they attacked the Birth Centre; they cut the midwifery program; cut birthing services to Flin Flon; cut \$1.3 million from daycare services, and as with his Filmon predecessor, has systemically targeted nurses, who are predominantly women; voted against Bill 200, which would have protected women and abortion health-care providers; voted against Bill 227 requiring Manitoba judges to take training on sexual assault and rape culture—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —and consent; cut \$120,000 from the North Point—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —Douglas Women's Centre; actively restricts access to the abortion pill.

So my message to Manitoba women on this International Women's Day is to get out and vote in the next election. Vote out this Premier and certainly any minister who has actively sat by or participates in the dismantling of women and girls'-health care system in Manitoba.

Miigwech, and happy International Women's Day.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Happy International Women's Day, everyone.

Today we highlight the common struggle for women's liberation around the world. I'd like to take a moment to credit the origins of International Women's Day, being first organized by the Socialist Party of America on February 28th, 1909, in New York. The following year, the international socialist women's conference adopted the idea to create an annual International Women's Day.

Madam Speaker, women's movements across the globe have historically not only fought for their own rights, but also for workers' rights, for the environment, for peace and for justice.

Previous International Women's Days have highlighted the unique struggles of displaced women, rural women and women in prison. This year the UN theme is: think equal, build smart and innovate for change, which celebrates women in STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

There are more women accessing higher education now than ever before, but there is still work that needs to be done. The STEM field is still male-dominated and Canadian statistics show us that women are less likely to choose a STEM program, regardless of ability. This loss of potential means that we are missing out on much-needed innovations and advances in technology.

Imagine the possibilities if we had more women innovating and creating right here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to wish all my female colleagues and women around Manitoba and the world a happy International Women's Day.

* (10:10)

And in closing, allow me to quote Helen Reddy: I am woman, hear me roar / You can bend but never break me / because it only serves to make me / more determined to achieve my final goal.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Wellness Institute

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): I rise today to recognize an organization dedicated to improving healthy lifestyles in northwest Winnipeg: the Wellness Institute.

Located at Seven Oaks General Hospital, the Wellness Institute is a certified medical fitness facility and an internationally recognized leader in the prevention and management of chronic disease.

Built 1996, the Wellness Institute remains the only facility of its kind in Canada attached to a hospital, and came about only because of substantial community support at the time. Wellness Institute serves as a central part of chronic illness prevention strategies to reduce the incidences of lifestyle-related chronic illness and, in turn, reduce the demand on the health-care system.

Wellness Institute is a multi-level facility that features a running track, dedicated fitness yoga studios and resistance training, free weights, a heated therapy pool and a full-sized gymnasium for activities like basketball, badminton and pickleball.

Wellness Institute offers a wide range of programs for people of all ages and fitness levels, and many past and present members of the Manitoba Legislature have accessed these facilities. I am proud to include myself with over 7,000 members of the Wellness Institute.

Wellness Institute works 'collaboraty' with Seven Oaks hospital Chronic Disease Innovation Centre to support research and innovation in lifestyle medicine. Research and evaluation efforts have demonstrated that the Wellness Institute improves health outcomes and lowers health-care costs.

The Wellness Institute has received numerous local, national, international awards, including recognition from the Medical Fitness Association, international coalition for active aging and World Health Organization.

Wellness Institute offers evidence-based health and wellness programs to support our community's response to global health challenges related to an aging population, combined with unhealthy lifestyles, that is leading to a rising rates of lifestyle-related disease, including heart disease, diabetes, lung diseases and cancer.

North Winnipeg is fortunate to have a unique facility which provides a wide variety of fitness programs, therapeutic services and, importantly, space and opportunities for socializing. Wellness Institute has developed a reputation for innovation and excellence for its model in keeping communities healthy and well.

Madam Speaker, we are joined by members of the Wellness Institute today, and I ask all of my colleagues to join me in welcoming them to Manitoba Legislature.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kildonan.

Mr. Curry: I ask for leave that we may include the names of our guests from the Wellness Institute in Hansard.

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

Wellness Institute representatives: Ashley Derlago; Louise Evaschesen; Tanya Kozera; Don MacDonald; Casie Nishi; Colin Tirschmann; Carole Urias; Karin Whalen, director; Amy Yonda.

Baptist Mission Apartments

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): We know this government's sorry record when it comes to Manitoba Housing: 1,000 units of affordable housing been closed by the Pallister government. The maintenance budget for Manitoba Housing has been cut by two thirds.

What does it look like when Tory cuts come to your neighbourhood? Well, unfortunately, people in the West End are finding out, as the government relocates more than 60 people from Baptist Mission Apartments on Sargent Avenue.

Baptist Mission Apartments was built in 1971 and has more than 50 suites. It is owned by Manitoba Housing and for a long time has been managed by a board affiliated with Mission Baptist Church at the corner of Sargent and Home.

Manitoba Housing told tenants and the board that the building would be emptied. In January, I wrote to the Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson) asking for a briefing on the future of the building so we could work with tenants, the church and the wider community.

Aside from acknowledgement, I received no reply until I wrote the minister again last month. Finally, late on the Friday before the long weekend, the minister's office responded, refusing to provide a briefing or any other information about the future of the building.

Speculation about the future of this building is rampant in the community, with many concerned the building will be sold or even demolished. I've received nothing from the minister's office or Manitoba Housing that gives me or my community any belief that tenants will ever be able to return to the building. When asked, I can only tell people that

this government refuses to tell us their plans for the building.

What was a positive community on Sargent Avenue, close to shopping services and a short bus ride to downtown on the 15 bus, has been taken apart. Most tenants have been relocated to Bluebird Lodge on Keewatin Street, where they trying to put down new roots.

We know that Tory times are hard times. The former residents of 'bapton'—Baptist Mission Apartments and our West End community are reminded of that every single day, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for—prior to recognizing the next member to speak, I would indicate to members in the gallery that there is to be no applause from gallery members and—in any of the proceedings on the floor. So I just kindly ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

St. Bartholomew Anglican Church

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind—this is the first and greatest commandment; and the second is like it: love your neighbour as yourself.

Sixty years ago, a few dozen residents of the then-brand new Windsor Park subdivision resolved to put Jesus's words of wisdom into practice by establishing St. Bartholomew Anglican Church.

Back then, some even took out mortgages on their homes to ensure that a church would be built under the leadership of their first rector, Reverend Patrick Lee, who later became bishop of the Diocese of Rupert's Land.

Today, their new priest, Reverend Andrew Rampton continues to lead them in their worship and in service to their community.

St. Bartholomew Anglican Church—or St. Bart's, as it's better known—has always been active in serving others in their community and around the world. For over 35 years, they've hosted a food bank ministry that now serves more than 100 client families.

They also have a women's circle that sews clothing for children in Central America and Uganda. They support Osborne House, Middlechurch Home, Siloam Mission and more.

The children of the congregation are taught moral values, civic responsibility and goal setting at

Sunday school, Guides, Pathfinders and Scouts, and the congregation's most recent project is providing space for a daycare expected to open later this spring.

Sixty years of service is a significant achievement, so earlier today I was pleased to present several members of St. Bart's congregation with a certificate of congratulations, and I can mention that those same members are in the gallery now.

But I do want to single out one member in particular: Mrs. Jean Cross. Mrs. Cross is now 90 years young and has been a member of St. Bartholomew Anglican Church from the very beginning. She was one of those faithful founding members who resolved to establish an Anglican church in Windsor Park 60 years ago. I'm so grateful for her leadership and I'm pleased she could join us today.

It's my prayer that the congregation of St. Bart's will continue to love God and to love their neighbours in Windsor Park and the world.

So please join me in congratulating the congregation of St. Bartholomew Anglican Church, including those who have joined us in the gallery today.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Radisson.

Mr. Teitsma: Madam Speaker, I ask leave to have the names of my guests from the parish included in Hansard.

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

St. Bartholomew Anglican Church representatives: Carol Bailey, Dave Bailey, Jean Cross, Adam Dobson, Lynn Doyle, Helen Hunter, June James, Ken Joyal, Andrew Rampton, Linda Robbins, Sid Robbins, Val Ross, Mary Stones, Jeannette Wolfe.

International Women's Day

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize International Women's Day.

I also want to—especially want to recognize the history of the Manitoba Liberal Party and of leaders in that party who have been pioneers in women's rights: Nellie McClung, of course, was one of a group of suffragettes who helped ensure that women earned the vote, though recognizing, of course, that it was not all women at the time. But, though she left

for Alberta, the first female MLA was Edith Rogers who played an incredible role in Manitoba politics. She helped actually create the Winnipeg Foundation and even then played an incredible role in child care and social welfare and looking after all Manitobans.

Sharon Carstairs was the first-ever female leader of a political party in Manitoba and the first-ever leader of the opposition. And, of course, the Manitoba Liberal Party has had a number of women who were leaders, including Ginny Hasselfield and Rana Bokhari.

On a personal note, I'd like to recognize some of the strong women in my life. One is that—well, of course, Judy Klassen. She was—yes. She was interim leader. I didn't mean to slight you—sorry; not—I did not mean to slight the member from Kewatinook. *[interjection]* Sorry.

Anyway, on a personal note I'd like to recognize some of the strong women in my history: that my grandfather had a sister who was one of the first doctors at Boston University—she was from PEI, was told she would not be able to be a doctor, she could only be a nurse, but put herself through medical school working in the cafeteria; my mother, of course, who was an architect; my wife, who has made me a better human being. And I hope that all these strong women, including all the strong women of this Chamber will be—continue to be an inspiration for my daughters and all the women in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Stanley Oleson

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to commemorate the life of Stanley Oleson who passed away at the Glenboro Health Centre this past December at the age of 87.

Stan lived in Glenboro and raised three boys with his late wife, Charlotte, and Stan was a strong supporter of Charlotte, who served as a minister under the Filmon government.

* (10:20)

Stan was an integral part of the community. He also served as town councillor and mayor. Stan was passion—a passionate volunteer throughout his life in many areas but was particularly involved in curling and baseball.

He served 22 years as a director of the Manitoba Curling Association and, in 1992 and '93, he served

as the president of the Canadian Curling Association, in which he represented Canada at the World Curling Federation. In 1999 and 2000, Stan served as the chairman of a provincial committee which brought about the amalgamation of the Manitoba Curling Association and the Manitoba Ladies Curling Association. He's named an honorary life member of the Canadian Curling Association, the Manitoba Curling Association, Pembina Curling Club and the Glenboro Curling Club.

And Stan spent many years managing the Glenboro senior baseball club and working the local diamonds. He acted on the host committee for numerous provincial and western Canadian championships. He also served as the president of the Santa Clara Baseball League and as the treasurer of the Manitoba Baseball Association.

Stan was a founding member of the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame in 1996 and became their first secretary-treasurer. Stan has been recognized for his contributions in sport and has been inducted into the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame, the Canadian Curling Hall of Fame, the Manitoba Curling Hall of Fame and the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame.

Stan was a true community, provincial and national volunteer, and I ask for all members of the House to join me in a tribute to Stan Oleson.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have a guest joining us in the House in the loge to my left.

And on behalf of all of us, I would like to welcome Marianne Cerilli back to our Legislature. The former MLA for Radisson, we welcome you back.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier had a choice in his budget yesterday. He could continue with his plan to close emergency rooms, to cancel hundreds of cardiac surgeries and to close more clinics in Manitoba, or he could've started to take a different, brighter, more inspiring path.

He chose not to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –take that better, brighter, more inspiring path.

The choice the Premier made is clear: he thinks it's important to cut the No. 1 priority of Manitobans, Madam Speaker, and that's health care.

Manitobans have had enough. They're frustrated with the closure of emergency rooms; they're frustrated with clinics closing and wait times getting longer and longer. And how does the Premier respond to that frustration? Well, he announces a \$120-million cut to health care. That's just simply out of touch with the priorities of Manitobans. Madam Speaker, \$120 million? That could keep the Concordia emergency room open for 15 years.

Will the Premier cancel his plan to close up–

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Yesterday did demonstrate our commitment to health care, Madam Speaker, and our budgetary commitment in this coming year will be close to half a billion dollars more than the previous NDP ever–

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pallister: The member seeks to inspire with fear and with promises to go back, Madam Speaker. But Manitobans know that this province is improving wait times, improving services, cutting ambulance fees in half and is the only province making headway against the threat of Liberal-reduced support for health care from the federal government.

So we are the most improved province when it comes to health care and we're committed to keeping it that way, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: So, Madam Speaker, the Premier has cut \$120 million from health care in this latest budget.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Again, I'm just reading directly here from–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –the budget document itself, Madam Speaker. When you–*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –compare the last year's budget numbers, 6,771 versus this year's 6,651, simple arithmetic will show that there was a \$120-million cut to health care in Manitoba this year.

Again, Manitobans want to see their health care protected. They're shocked that an amount of \$120 million would be cut from this budget, knowing full well that that could've kept the Concordia emergency room open for the next 15 years, Madam Speaker.

We've already seen the results of this Premier's cuts: cancelled surgeries, increasing wait times, closed clinics.

Will he back off this plan and keep the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia open?

Mr. Pallister: Michael J. Fox would be proud, Madam Speaker. The member's idea of inspiration is Back to the Future. Let's go back. Let's retreat. Let's go back to when we were 10th out of 10 and getting further behind ninth.

That's his idea of progress. It's not our idea of progress, Madam Speaker. The member speaks about simple math. Here's the simple math: the NDP went to the doors of people's homes in this province, promised them, looked in their eye and said, here's some math for you. We'll keep your PST at seven, they said. It's an oath. It's a solemn vow, they said. Vote for us and you'll get a higher PST. That's not what they said, but that's what they did.

And the member wants to be believable, but he's not. He's unbelievable. His party is unbelievable. They broke their word to Manitobans and yesterday, through the hard work of a team of people willing to do that work–yesterday, we kept our promise to Manitobans, the promise the NDP broke.

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

Mr. Kinew: But why is he so mad, Madam Speaker? If he really believed anything that he said, why would he be so upset?

If only he could summon that kind of anger at the closure of Seven Oaks emergency room, at the closure of Concordia emergency room; if only he could summon that passion when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) walked into his office with the proposal to cut \$120 million from our health-care budget; if only he could summon that sort of passion to stand up for the No. 1 priority of Manitobans–

which is health care—then, perhaps, the Premier would be in touch; however, he is not, and it's a sad condemnation of his failure to lead and the complete mismanagement of his government on health care, and now we're seeing the results on patients, on nurses and on health-care aides, Madam Speaker.

I would invite the Premier to take this opportunity and cancel his plan to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia.

Will he do so today?

Mr. Pallister: I invite and encourage any question from that member on the issues around anger management.

I am passionate. This team is very passionate and this is the team that is willing to do the hard work—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —that the member opposite, apparently, is not to convert himself or his party into anything that has a smidgen of integrity for the people of Manitoba. They promised they would not raise taxes; they raised them.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order

Mr. Pallister: Ten out of 10 on health care, Madam Speaker and this government already, in just three years of hard work—and I congratulate our Finance Minister and the members of our Treasury Board for their hard work in achieving the changes we're making in health care and in every other file: MRA wait times down; emergency wait times down; more nurses; more doctors; better care, sooner; and we are—according to the Canadian institute of health information—the No. 1 province in our nation in improving health care.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: I know it's Friday, even without a calendar.

I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please, so that we can, in a timely manner, get through oral questions; and I would ask for everybody's co-operation that we take the time to properly listen to questions and responses.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a second question.

Mr. Kinew: So I'm not too sure where the Premier has been spending his time lately, but certainly it's not here in Winnipeg listening to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, who's been raising the alarm about the dramatic increase in emergency room wait times.

If the Premier wants to talk about No. 1, perhaps he would like to learn that this \$120-million cut to health care that his government is proposing in this budget is the single greatest cut to health care ever in the history of Manitoba. And we are seeing the result.

* (10:30)

We know that patients are having their cardiac surgeries cancelled on the day, when they're already in the hospital being prepped for surgery. We know that many patients are not going to get their primary prevention at the Family Medical Centre. We know that the wait times are increasing.

Will the Premier simply back off of his misguided plan to close the emergency rooms at Seven Oaks and Concordia and instead invest in a real plan to keep Manitobans healthy at home?

Mr. Pallister: Manitobans know the NDP are little rascals when it comes to numbers, Madam Speaker, and the fact remains that we are investing over \$400 million more in this year's budget on health care than the NDP ever did, but more importantly we're achieving better outcomes for patients with that investment.

And, Madam Speaker, that's the piece the member doesn't want to talk about. He can't get to step 1 on the recovery program: step 1, admit you have a problem. Manitoba had a problem under the previous administration: 10th out of 10 and getting worse.

We're addressing that problem. It takes courage. We have the courage. It takes hard work. We're willing to do that work. It takes teamwork. We have the team to do it.

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

Road Repairs and Flood Protection Budget Reduction Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, real courage would be admitting that his plan to close clinics and emergency rooms just isn't working.

We know that the Premier's budget—it'll—also doing real damage to roads and highways in our province. Because of the budget announced by this Premier, the City of Winnipeg will not do any residential road work this year. That's because the Province is choking off funding to the biggest municipality in our province. That means that the Pallister government's cuts to Winnipeg streets will get even worse—some \$40 million.

Chris Lorenc from the Heavy Construction Association, was clear. He said this budget is, quote: passing on additional costs to families, kids and future generations. That's also a reference to the fact that not only did they cut Winnipeg road repairs, they also cut \$11 million from highway repairs.

Why isn't the Premier acting along with the priorities of Manitobans, who want to see our roads and highways improved?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member thinks that the road to recovery is self-propelled, Madam Speaker. It's not. It requires work. The ladder of success is not an escalator, as the member would like to think. It's not going to get us there just waving around false numbers or talking about going back to the past when we were dead last.

Madam Speaker, the NDP left a monstrous mess for someone to clean up and we're cleaning it up. We've taken on the challenge of fixing the finances. We've taken 80 per cent off what would have been the projected deficit by Treasury Board officials this year—80 per cent reduction.

We've kept the promise they broke on reducing the PST. At a time when interest rates are rising and we have to face the challenge of them—burgeoning interest charges on the NDP debt in our province—we're doing it. We're facing those challenges head on.

The member, I would encourage, should do the same. The fact remains whether he is willing or not, Madam Speaker, we are; and the only thing better than today in Manitoba is going to be tomorrow in Manitoba because of that.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Premier is cutting \$120 million from Health. They are freezing road repair in the city of Winnipeg. They're cutting—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —\$11 million from highway repairs across Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Now, many Manitobans have also been concerned about the possibility of a flood this spring. What is the Premier's response to that priority? Well, in this budget he's cutting the flood-fighting amounts by some \$40 million, Madam Speaker.

That's not only wrong; that's foolish. After underspending tens of millions of dollars on flood fighting in past years, they're now bringing an absolute—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —dollar cut to the flood protection budget, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier simply admit that his obsession with cutting costs and cutting the services that Manitobans rely on is wrong and that he needs to reverse course, restore funding to health care, restore funding to roads and restore funding to flood protection?

Mr. Pallister: I have to totally discard the member's false preamble. It's false in every respect, Madam Speaker. We are, of course, investing more and have invested more in strategic infrastructure and specifically roads than the NDP did in 15 of their 17 years in government.

Now, the two years where they blew the budget, Madam Speaker, they were desperately trying to seek popularity by borrowing money from our future at unsustainable rates, and everyone in the province knows that and Chris Lorenc knows that, too.

So we're maintaining our commitment to infrastructure, but more than that we're committed to rebuilding the schools the NDP forgot to build. Seven new—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —schools, Madam Speaker, seven new schools so children can get educated in a proper environment, not in a trailer or a cart or a little cardboard box, but a real school. The NDP forgot about that investment. They didn't make that investment and we are.

In terms of fixing the finances we are also rebuilding the services of our province, Madam Speaker, and we are building our economy in partnership with the people of this province because we have faith in the people of this province, unlike the members opposite.

Health-Care Services Budget 2019

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Yesterday's budget cut \$120 million from the health budget. It's clear that this Pallister government only plans to balance the budget on the backs of health care and those who need it the most. That's why they're closing emergency rooms, they've closed clinics, and they're not listening to nurses who have been telling them that what they're doing is wrong.

The minister could not—he could've taken a different approach. Has he? No. He wants to balance the budget on the backs of Manitobans in health care.

Will he today listen to the health-care providers who have urged this government to back down, back off of these plans?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for her question. I thank her for the opportunity to respond and put accurate information on the record.

We are proud of Budget '19-20 and what it does in health care. I'm looking at page 3 of the budget, and I want to compare for that member the forecast for eighteen-ninety-teen—to the budget for '19-20. What it shows clearly is that health is up \$118 million. Health-care spending's going up.

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

Mrs. Smith: That minister can spin it any way he wants; it's right in the budget book.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: A hundred and twenty million dollars being cut from health care. That's health care to Manitobans. That's the No. 1 priority in this province right now, and this government is failing to listen to Manitobans. Instead, they want to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —cut everywhere. They've cut surgeries. Vacancy rates went from 20 per cent to now 30 per cent, and it's all being done on this minister's timeline and the priorities of KPMG, not on what's best for patients, not on what health-care professionals are telling him.

Why has the minister made these unprecedented cuts to our health-care system?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I know the member is new to her role, but the budget is pretty clear.

It's page 3, and I won't table the budget because, actually, my colleague did that yesterday and he did a great job. But what he showed is that health spending is actually up from the forecast—that is, the most accurate report of this year's spending—to the new budget: \$118 million up for the priorities of Manitoba, for good investments, for cutting wait times.

We stand committed to better health care for all Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Smith: Cut, cut, cut: that's what I heard from out of that minister's mouth. That's all they're doing is cutting and cutting and cutting.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: Actually, it's gone to chopping now.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: Our health-care system and our health-care professionals has told us that it's in a dire need. This government isn't listening. Patients have even told them that they're having to wait longer. Cardiac surgeries are being cancelled. And what is this minister doing? He's cutting more money from the budget. Shame.

Will he stop the damage he's doing to our communities now and to our health-care system and reverse those decisions?

* (10:40)

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, it was just February and that meant it was just I Love to Read Month, and many of my colleagues and I had the opportunity to go into schools and talk to students about the importance of developing a lifelong love of reading.

I wonder if the member would turn to page 3 and read the budget with me. The forecast to actual clearly shows that health-care spending is up \$118 million.

Better health care for Manitobans, sooner.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

**Accessibility of Mifegymiso Across Manitoba
Med Students' Letter-Writing Campaign**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), as a former administrator, doesn't need to be mansplained on how to read.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: Today, we are joined—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —by Medical Students for Choice group—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.

Ms. Fontaine: —an amazing group of future medical doctors who are dedicating their time to demand equal, accessible and free access to Mifegymiso across Manitoba. They've been putting in a tremendous amount of time and preparation in a letter-signing campaign that is currently under way at Fools & Horses until 1 p.m.

I table for the Health Minister letters which represent only 5 per cent of the total letters currently signed.

Will the Minister of Health attend today's event and commit to providing universal access to Mifegymiso across Manitoba?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I'm pleased to also welcome the medical students into the gallery here this morning and really congratulate them and wish them well on their studies. I know the Health Minister and myself are looking forward to welcoming new doctors into the province of Manitoba, and I look forward to my very productive meeting with these future doctors very shortly.

And I'm also pleased to put some facts on the record for the benefit of the students in the audience this morning, that we have provided access to Mifegymiso for women across the province. In fact, our government has provided access to—over 1,000 women have had fully funded access to Mifegymiso, and we're working on ensuring better health-care outcomes for all women throughout the province.

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

Ms. Fontaine: These future doctors understand the value of respecting women and girls' reproductive rights, and that restricting access to women and girls' reproductive services is in contravention of our very basic human rights.

I appreciate the students' dedication and commitment to reproductive health rights and I lift them up for their agency and the time that they're taking from the very heavy studies to bring Mifegymiso to all Manitoba women and girls.

I table for the Minister of Status of Women letters which represent only 5 per cent of the total letters.

So will the Minister of Status of Women attend today's event and commit today, on international woman's day, to fully accessible Mifegymiso across the province.

Ms. Squires: I recognize that the member opposite is more committed to playing identity politics and committed to her ideology, and that forces her to ignore the facts. But the facts are that we have provided access to Mifegymiso for women throughout the entire province.

We've had over 1,000 patients access Mifegymiso fully funded through our coverage, and we're going to provide services for women and girls. Unlike the NDP who failed women throughout their 17 years in office, we're standing up for women and girls in the province of Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Yesterday the Minister for Status of Women said, and I quote, that over 600 women have accessed Mifegymiso free of charge. We've only had fewer than 5 per cent of women need to pay for it in some or all of these costs, so we don't think it is very available—we do think it is very available for many women across the province, end quote.

The minister should know by now that this is not an accurate way to measure the uptake or access to Mifegymiso across the province.

Under this Pallister government's watch we know that women travel up to 20 hours to access Mifegymiso, something that should be readily available in their home communities no matter where they are in the province.

So will this government—this Premier (Mr. Pallister)—stand today—

Madam Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, we know that 96 per cent of patients accessing Mifegymiso have received it fully funded through the—through either the formulary or through other access centres in the province in Manitoba.

We're continuing to enhance the health-care system for all Manitobans, but particularly women and girls. The Minister of Health and myself toured the new Women's Hospital that will be opening up and very, very proud of that ACCESS centre, that facility that will be serving women throughout the province. We're really pleased to be working in partnership in enhancing health-care services for all women and girls in the province of Manitoba.

Provincial Deficit Reduction Government Economic Plan

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): This PC government is once again putting the finances of the provincial government and the economy of Manitoba at risk. The reduced deficit is due, nearly dollar for dollar, to \$731 million a year in increased transfers from the federal government, after a half decade of frozen funding under the Harper Conservatives.

Manitoba is now more dependent than ever on federal transfers and under this Premier this Province's credit rating has been downgraded twice. The first time was because, just as the Doug Ford PCs did earlier this year, the government massively overstated the size of the deficit and the result for both Provinces was a downgrade and higher interest rates.

The second time was because this government announced its intention to blow a permanent hole in the budget with tax cuts that mean the Province may not be able to pay its bills.

How is this government going to pay off the debt the PCs and the NDP have racked up with hundreds of millions of dollars less in revenue every year? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate any question from the Liberal leader on the issue of money management.

Madam Speaker, the federal Liberal government he constantly defends to Manitobans ran on a promise to balance the books, which were balanced before it came in. They've broken that promise. We ran on a promise to fix the finances of the disastrously mismanaged Province that had seen our debt double in six years before the last election and had seen our taxes rise, despite the promise they would not be raised, and that left us with a billion dollars a year of debt-service cost.

We've reduced taxes and kept our promise, and the federal Liberal government breaks its promise. And the member stands there and he attacks Manitobans as he insinuates that this budget is anything but good for Manitobans while defending a federal Liberal government that attacks women and attacks its own principles on a daily basis.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, of course I'm asking about Manitoba's finances. It would be great if the Premier could pull his head out of his Ottawa.

This government's plan is to borrow \$300 million—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —to pay for a tax cut that is going to permanently make it harder for the Province to pay its bills. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: This budget does not only virtually nothing to invest, build and grow. They have left \$1.9 billion in federal funding on the table. This Province—this government will take money from the federal government so long as it makes them look good. But it appears the Premier is willing to starve Manitoba of \$1.9 billion in desperately needed investment in order to make the federal government look bad.

Manitobans need mental health care; they need home care; they need housing; and I've heard from Manitoba businesses who are on the verge of bankruptcy because this government does not understand that we need to invest and reinvest in order to grow the economy.

In 2017 this government promised to match federal funding.

How can they justify leaving \$1.9 billion on the table today? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: The honourable—*[interjection]*
Order. Order.

Mr. Pallister: The member asks me to discard and disregard Ottawa while using the word federal and Ottawa seven times in his question.

So Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

*(10:50)

Mr. Pallister: The member used the word bankruptcy. The Bank of Canada has just put out an analysis saying that the number, the increase in the number of people seeking counselling to avoid bankruptcy in this country has gone up by double digits over the last year.

And he is right, if he agrees with us that more money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans and Manitoba small businesses is a good idea, but he is wrong if he advocates continuously for higher taxes on those very people who he is failing to think about in his preamble and question, who we will always bear in our hearts and minds.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, when Standard & Poor's downgraded this government's credit rating for the second time, they said, and I quote: Manitoba achieving its revenue targets will largely depend on the economy performing in line with its forecasts.

The Conference Board of Canada is projecting that Manitoba's growth next year will drop below 1 per cent, which is the worst growth in 20 years—since the last time the PCs were in power. This government has no economic plan for growth and no plan for investments in infrastructure beyond the \$1 billion cap, which has seen—again, which has seen many businesses struggling.

We never know which Premier to believe because here in the House he boasts about his spending, but in Brandon in January, he boasted he reduced spending by 8 per cent.

The money this government is leaving on the table could mean the difference between jobs and growth on the one hand, and recession on the other.

Does this Premier recognize that his three years of cuts and freezes could tip Manitoba into a recession?

Mr. Pallister: We lead the country in investing as a government in health, families and education per capita, Madam Speaker. We maintain those investments. We've increased those investments in those three major departments by over \$1 billion since the NDP were pushed out of power by the people of Manitoba.

We remain focused on improving our services and we remain cognizant that we must fix our finances and move to balance, and we are somewhat ahead of schedule in doing so.

Bond-rating agencies are, of course, a concern, Madam Speaker. Our interest burden, the NDP debt burden that we have inherited, is enormous, but I would say the member needs to understand something very clearly: 57 per cent of Manitoba households have less than \$200 of discretionary income after they pay their bills. He advocates for higher taxes. That means even less money on the kitchen tables of those families.

Think, for a second, about the positive impacts that this budget will have on Manitoba families. Think of them. Don't think of Ottawa so much.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Development of Silica Sand Mine Health and Environmental Concerns

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Happy International Women's Day, all.

We've been hearing the phrase the rule of law quite a bit lately. Canadians have seen first-hand that there seems to be one set of rules in Ottawa for the rich and the privileged and a different set of rules for everyone else; and here in Manitoba local residents have had a very hard time getting a straight answer from this government.

So on their behalf I will ask, quite simply: Has the provincial government issued a work permit to Canadian Premium Sand to begin site clearing near their traditional territory of Hollow Water?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): It's clear that member opposite isn't quite certain of the process that companies and the Province adheres to when there's applications for work permits, and so I can assure the member that all the environmental concerns are being addressed through the process, the standard process that we go through, the environmental—the rigorous

environmental process, as well as a full section 35 consultation that is occurring right now.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: So the concerns that are being addressed would, for instance, include the bulldozer now destroying a traditional trap line, the new road destroying a traditional trap line, the construction site—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I would ask the table to stop the clock for a moment, please.

I would indicate and just remind the member—and I'm sure he knows—that we are not allowed to show exhibits in the House. It is fine for him to table it, but not to demonstrate them as exhibits. So I would ask the member to conclude his question without the use of exhibits.

Mr. Altemeyer: All of these documents are for tabling. There's three copies, as required, Madam Speaker, and the minister is completely wrong. If she's issued a work permit, then she needs to state as much. If she has not, then these activities need to be addressed by her department or another one.

There's also the fact that multiple sections of her own department—Air Quality branch, Eastern Region for Sustainable Development, environmental compliance—all have listed concerns which she has not addressed.

When is she going to address the concerns from her own officials?

Ms. Squires: And last week I had the pleasure of spending some time with the chief from Hollow Water First Nation, Chief Larry Barker, and he was very committed to economic development for his community and I'm really—was really inspired to hear his passion for economic development and protecting the environment.

And I would like to ask this member if he would like to take this opportunity to apologize to chief and council at Hollow Water First Nation for misrepresenting the chief's concerns and the chief's commitment towards economic development for his people on his traditional territory, apologize for misrepresenting their interests. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Altemeyer: To my knowledge, I have not mentioned the chief by name or council in any of these conversations today. This is another not-very-veiled attack by a minister who doesn't want to give a straight answer. And the concerns being raised by her own department are not insignificant.

Quote: There is a likelihood that proponent activities will contribute to a deterioration of ambient air quality. On wildlife: the only way to assess the effects is through a monitoring plan which the proponent isn't going to do.

Quote from the medical officer of health: I do have some significant concerns about this proposed silica sand mine. The project has several potential detrimental effects on human health.

They're going to have hundreds of trucks every day driving across the top of a hydro dam. Can anyone think of how that might end, Madam Speaker?

Will the minister commit today to a full public panel review with intervenors to get to the bottom of the full impacts on this proposed project near Hollow Water First Nation?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, our government is committed to a full stringent review and licensing process, as we have always done on all projects throughout the province of Manitoba.

But speaking of veiled attack, where was this member's voice when his government clear-cutted 450 extra kilometres to build a bipole down the west side of the province? No environmentalist would ever support that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —the cutting of forest and land for the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —unnecessary putting up a bipole line down the west side of the province. When will that member apologize for the environmental degradation that his government did during their 17 years in office?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

PST Reduction Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, a promise made by our government is another promise kept. After years of overtaxation and broken promises by the NDP, Manitobans deserve a break, and our government is giving them just that.

Can the Minister of Finance please explain for the House how our government is leaving more money on the kitchen table for Manitoba families?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Our reduction of PST is about clearly three things: Correcting a wrong; the tax should never have been implemented without the consent of Manitobans. It's keeping an election promise: a promise is made, a promise is kept. And it's also giving residents of the province of Manitoba a tax break 'thich' they very much need.

What this means is for a family of four over the next four years is over 3,000 more dollars in their pockets, Madam Speaker. It means over \$1 billion for individuals and families and businesses in the province of Manitoba. It also means over \$360 million in direct sales for Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Health-Care Services Provincial Spending

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): The problem with this government's assertion of higher spending on health is that they have routinely promised to spend more in budgets, only to claw it back over the course of the year.

* (11:00)

Two years ago this government spent \$200 million less than they promised, and last year they spent \$247 million less than they budgeted. The reality, when we look at actual spending, is that health care in Manitoba has been flatlined for the last three years.

Why should we believe what their numbers are at this time?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate any question from a Liberal member on flatlining, Madam Speaker.

The fact of the matter is, our increased commitment to health care is evident in the budget figures, which the member could review, should he

so wish. And he would find that we have increased our investments annually in health care each year, year after year, and we expect to continue to do so. We have increased by a total of well over \$400 million our commitment beyond the NDP's commitment.

But the key point is not simply the amount of the investment; it's the fact that we are getting better outcomes for Manitobans. Ambulance fees that are at half the level they were at three years ago mean that seniors don't need to be reluctant to call and use ambulance services in our province anymore. The elimination of that fear, the reduction in the fear that the system is not sustainable, these are key things; they're immeasurable. And those are the by-products of a government that's committed to getting better care sooner to Manitobans.

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

Shared Health Services Implementation Concerns

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Two days ago this government dropped a radical reorganization of Manitoba's health-care system, and documents show that Manitoba Health is going to be purged of anyone who actually delivers health care. There will be no branches at all dedicated to policy.

In addition to that, the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba is going to be dissolved.

This government is turning down mental health care funding, and while they promised to implement the VIRGO report, Shared Health is not fully set up.

How is any of this going to get done when there's nobody there to do it, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I see the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) clapping loudly. He has advocated in the past for the total elimination of all regional health authorities—and the leader may wish to check with the member from River Heights, the former leader of his own party, about consistency in advocacy. Perhaps the party could benefit from that.

Rather than espousing that no one will be there, the member should show respect for the people who work in our health-care system, something we bear in mind every day. More nurses—more nurses—more doctors, more specialists, more paramedics. We're investing in getting better care sooner to Manitobans

because it is the top priority of Manitobans, who once had the assurance of a 50 per cent partner with the federal government, that saw a diminishment to 25 per cent funding from the federal government, that now enjoy the support of 18 per cent in its funding from the federal government. And that member, that Liberal leader, applauds that 'diminuation' of the contribution to health care.

And we will stand up, and we will lead the cause of returning to sustainable health care in this country.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Flin Flon General Hospital Obstetric Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Access to quality health care is a fundamental right of all Manitobans, no matter where they live.

(2) The Premier has slashed budgets, cancelled projects for northern communities, making it harder for families to get the primary health care they need.

(3) The budget of the northern health authority has been slashed by over \$6 million, which has negatively affected doctor retention programs and the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

(4) With limited services in the North, the Premier is forcing families and seniors to travel further for the health care they need.

(5) On November 6th, 2018, the northern regional health authority announced that obstetric delivery—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lindsey: (5) On November 6th, 2018, the northern regional health authority announced that obstetric delivery services at the Flin Flon General Hospital would be suspended, with no discussion regarding when they will be reinstated.

(6) The result of this decision is that mothers in Flin Flon and the surrounding area will have to travel at least an hour and a half to The Pas, creating unnecessary risk for mothers and their babies.

The people of—sorry—(7), The people of Flin Flon are concerned for the health and safety of

mothers-to-be and their babies, including the extra physical and financial stress that will be placed upon them by this decision of the provincial government.

(8) There has been no commitment from the provincial government that mothers and their escorts who have to travel to The Pas will be covered by the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

(9) Flin Flon General Hospital is a regional hub that serves several communities on both sides of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

(10) Because this provincial government has refused to invest in much needed health-care services in The Pas, the hospital in The Pas may not be able to handle the extra workload created by this decision.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reinstate obstetric delivery services at Flin Flon General Hospital and work with the government of Saskatchewan and the federal government to ensure obstetric services continue to be available on regional basis.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Mike Woroniuk, Denise Woroniuk, Loretta Bartle and many other Manitobans.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I am advising under rule 34(6), the budget debate is being interrupted today in order to consider second reading of Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019, and that is allowable under rule 34(6) where it indicates that the budget debate can be interrupted.

So, therefore, we will move to calling Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019.

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that the Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019, now be read a second time and be referred to the committee of the House.

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

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health, that Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2019, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Fielding: It's my pleasure introduce Bill 16, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act for 2019, that implements the tax measures and Election Financing Act amendments announced in Budget 2019, and my first budget as the Minister of Finance.

These measures continue on our journey, really, to a road to recovery, Madam Speaker, that began three short years ago: a journey that we began when we made the focus of fixing the finances, repairing the services of the province of Manitoba and rebuilding the economy.

These four main acts—there's four real main acts to the bill: The Fuel Tax Act, The Income Tax Act, The Retail Sales Tax Act and The Election Financing Act. The Fuel Tax Act amended by this bill is to assist Manitoba's forestry industry in expanding the fuel tax exemption, including mill site equipment used by log handling and processing.

* (11:10)

The amendments to The Income Tax Act are as follows: extending the cultural industries print tax credit for one year to 2021 and limiting the credit to \$1.1 million per taxpayer; extended—or extending the small business venture tax credit to three years, to 2023; extending the book publishers—book publishing tax credit by five years to 2025; eliminating the sunset clause for the Film and Video Production Tax Credit; amending the Manufacturing

Investment Tax Credit as a result of the reduction of the PST sales tax.

Bill 16 also fulfills a promise we made to Manitobans during the election, and that is to lower the PST by one point, Madam Speaker, bring it down to 7 per cent from 8. This is a promise we made and a promise we kept.

The other measures we took with the PST is to not to apply the federal forced carbon taxed—the federal government is taxing the carbon tax with the GST. We're excluding the PST from the carbon tax.

We're also eliminating the 50 per cent election campaign expense subsidy for political parties and their candidates. In 2016 election, the subsidy cost Manitobans more than \$3 million. The subsidies is one of the most generous in Canada and unfairly supports large parties over small ones.

Madam Speaker, these measures provide Manitobans with tax relief. We promised by keeping more of their hard-earning tax dollars where they're needed most, on the kitchen table across the province.

Therefore, I ask all individuals in the House to support our government's plan to put these large—the largest tax cut in the province's history and a tax cut that all Manitobans deserve together.

So thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, my pleasure to rise and hopefully get some answers with regards to the budget implementations tax statutes act this morning.

I'd like the minister to comment on the timing of BITSA. I think this is, at least in my time here, quite unprecedented. We had a bill introduced in the House and not actually distributed until the budget was read, so I certainly would have remembered that in the past.

Can the minister comment on why BITSA's being brought forward now?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker. We think that Manitobans have been taxed the max for far too long. We introduced our budget that looked to reduce the PST by one point on July 1st, which is six years to the day when the former NDP government increased it without the consent of Manitobans. We think that Manitobans need a tax break. That's why we're putting it on the table for discussion right now.

Mr. Wiebe: I do think the minister might be confused. I'm not asking why the budget was brought now. That is the normal course of action for this House and for this Chamber, to be able to debate the budget. In fact, I was quite excited to do so here this morning, Madam Speaker.

What I'm asking about is the budget implementation and tax statutes act. As the minister knows, in previous years it has been slightly delayed for various reasons, and we can get into that and I'd be happy to do so.

I'm asking why was BITSA brought forward in such a rushed manner on the first day of the budget. In fact, before the budget was released, BITSA was tabled—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —in this House.

Mr. Fielding: Well, Madam Speaker, and we have the opposition, you know, before, apparently, it was too late. Now, it's too early. I don't know. I mean, maybe I think it just right this time.

So that's a part of the process. We think that it's important that Manitobans know where our political parties stand on these things and that's what we're doing.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it's actually not part of the process, and that's where the minister's missing the point here. In fact, this House is designed to allow for proper debate of each step in the process. And, while I said as I'm very happy to debate the various parts of the budget implementation and tax statutes act, in the past this government has used this particular bill in ways that it was never used before.

Now, again, the minister can go ahead with his budget. He can bring those ideas forward and pitch them to Manitobans, as they do every year. But why

was this BITSA bill brought before the budget bill? And then why was it brought for debate before we debate the budget?

Mr. Fielding: Well, Madam Speaker, we know what the NDP does when they don't like bills that they have; they just start to rewrite them. That's the same thing that happened with the PST when they didn't consult Manitobans and they increased the taxes, they jacked up the taxes on Manitobans.

We clearly think that that was not right. We think we need to correct a wrong. We think we're making our—we made a big commitment to Manitobans. We're following through on that commitment. That doesn't happen in politics a lot—and we think that Manitobans deserve a break. So we think it's an important process. It's an important debate to have. We understand what the NDP does. They just—if they don't like the legislation, they can recraft the legislation and they have to fight in the court.

So we think that it's important, it's transparent and it's open. It's here for people to vote. You can vote on it or you can vote against it: either you're for additional taxes for the province of Manitoba or—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, you know, I think that answer wouldn't wash with most Manitobans, and I do hope that folks paying attention at home do see the—what the minister is trying to do here in terms of the BITSA bill.

That being said, I did want to get on to what is most concerning to Manitobans and certainly to people in my constituency. I want to know what study, what 'public'—public opinion poll, what expert advice did the minister listen to when he decided to underspend in health by a quarter billion dollars last year, and cut \$120 million from the budget in health care this year.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: I quite like the member opposite, but he's confused with the rest of his caucus. They're leading him to some wrong information.

Manitobans—in fact, our government is spending more than \$414 million more on health than the previous government ever did. You look at where we're finishing in terms of health and we're projecting to spend. It's over \$118 million more in

health care and, more importantly, Madam Speaker, we're getting great results for Manitobans: lower ER wait times; more doctors. Those things are important to Manitobans.

Mr. Wiebe: I have too much respect for the member opposite to believe that he doesn't understand the basic accounting rules in government. I know he operated in this capacity at the city level, now at the provincial level as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding). He knows that his government underspent in health care \$250 million; and now this year, can just write that money down and say, well, we're not going to spend it, and that results in a cut of \$120 million. This is a major impact—has a major impact in my community.

So I'm asking him, who's he listening to? What experts are telling him to do this? Who is telling him that this is a good idea for the future of our health care system?

Mr. Fielding: Well, the residents of the province of Manitoba told us that they want us to make investments in priority areas. That's why we're investing more than \$414 million more in health. That's why we're investing more than \$434 million in education and that's why we're investing more than \$200 million in social services. And you know what, Madam Speaker, what Manitobans want most? They want results, and that's what we're getting with health care.

Mr. Wiebe: I think what the minister is doing is admitting that, in fact, he had no basis for doing this other than—and, of course, we know this to be the fact—that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has directed this minister to make these cuts and has said—tell—told, in fact, to all his ministers that the primary focus of this government is those cuts rather than investing in health care. As I said, it's a big deal in my community, so I guess what people in my neighbourhood would be asking is: With the increases to the federal transfers, with the increase to equalization payments that this government has received, would those payments factored into this budget that we have before us, would those be enough to keep the Concordia Hospital ER open for the foreseeable future?

Mr. Fielding: Well—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —what Manitobans want is results in health—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —care, and that's exactly what this government is delivering: less time waiting in ERs; there's more doctors, more nurses; there's less time transitioning to PCHs. Those are important things: less money to—people are going to have to spend less money to get an ambulance to ensure that their care is provided faster. We're getting more paramedics. We're providing more services there—and just to correct the record, we are spending \$118 million more than we're projecting to spend by the end of Q3, by the end of this year with this budget.

So budget for health care has gone up by over \$414 million on annual basis more than NDP ever spent.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the question's been asked a few times of the Premier. We're not sure where he's been spending his time, but I can maybe ask the question of the Minister of Finance where he's been spending his time, because it's certainly not in my community. It's not in the northeast part of this city. It's certainly not at Concordia ER—and if he believes that wait times are down, he needs to spend more time at Concordia ER, at HSC, at Seven Oaks, at Victoria, because we are certainly not seeing any kind of decreases in wait times.

* (11:20)

So, again, I'm just simply asking, based on the budget document that he should have in front of him, can—if you factor in all else being equal, those numbers—if increases from the federal government—would that be enough to keep the Concordia ER open for the foreseeable future?

Mr. Fielding: Where—well, where I have been spending a lot of time is actually the Grace Hospital. We currently just recently made a \$38-million investment in terms of our ER at the Grace Hospital.

I notice when the opposition—when the NDP were in power, the ERs at the Grace had the longest wait times in the country. That's changed since we've been here. We're making important improvements in the health-care system. ER wait times are down. It's not us saying it; it's the Canadian centre for health policy that's saying Manitoba is the only province that's showing substantial reductions in wait times.

We're making a difference for Manitobans. We're investing more money where it's needed to be: in health care.

Mr. Wiebe: As I said, Madam Speaker, the minister may not have been here in the last couple of months in Winnipeg. There certainly was, you know, a lot of anecdotal information, but also, you know, a lot of information that came through the media, that people were being turned away or being sent elsewhere in some of our busiest ERs.

So I just, you know, I—you know, aside from sort of the specifics of the BITSA bill, I just want to make this pitch one more time to this minister, to actually spend some time in our ERs, actually get out there and meet with people, listen to people. Their No. 1 issue is health care—health care, health care, health care. And they're asking: if they take those equalizations and the increases to federal transfers, could they keep these ERs open?

Mr. Fielding: Well, we are making important investments in health care, more than \$414 million than what the previous NDP government spent on health care. And, more importantly, what Manitobans want is results. And that's what we're producing: results, a better health-care system, a better experience, less wait times, more doctors, more nurses, more time or less time to transition to personal-care homes.

Those are important results that Manitobans want and expect.

Mr. Wiebe: There's no question health care's the No. 1 concern of Manitobans, but certainly there are many others that are now being hacked and slashed in this budget. We look at, for instance, flood protection here in this province.

Again, I come from a constituency that doesn't have a direct impact from flooding but understands the impact it has on our communities and on our province. Once again, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this minister seem totally unprepared and totally unwilling to acknowledge the danger we have from potential flooding. Why is this minister so underspending in the flood mitigation in this budget?

Mr. Fielding: Our government is investing \$322 million—a 35 per cent increase—in contingencies. That's—there's a part A and part B capital. Three hundred and twenty-two million; it's a 35 per cent increase in contingencies.

We're also increasing the emergency expenditures by four—\$49.5 million, which actually is about 174 million—174 per cent increase, Madam Speaker.

And, more importantly, we're enhancing the rainy day fund. We're putting \$15 million more in the rainy day fund. When the NDP had it, it was drained from 880-some-odd million dollars. For us, we're enhancing it. It's over 250-some-odd million dollars, a \$50-million enhancement.

So we're putting some contingencies in place to protect against the flooding.

Mr. Wiebe: I recognize that the minister wasn't here in 2011. And by here, I mean in this House. I know other members of his caucus weren't here at all. But, certainly, we understand here in this province how a flood can affect Manitobans. And when a flood is being—forecast to be coming that's comparable to the 2011 flood, which had a massive impact on our budget, surely his officials came to him and said, Minister, we need to put away proper funds in case this kind of thing happens again.

So I'm asking: Why is the minister underspending in this—such a critical part of his budget, in such a critical year?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I encourage the member to take a look at the budget.

There's money appropriated under section—I believe it's 26 of appropriations. We're spend—we're investing over \$322 million—about a 35 per cent increase—in our contingencies for capital and operating. That's a big increase. Our emergency expenditures are going up by \$49.5 million. That's 174 per cent increase over last year, and we're putting \$50 million more in the rainy day fund. I would suggest that there is a lot of contingencies if there's a flood or there's a downturn in the economy.

Mr. Wiebe: Again, I can recognize that the minister wasn't here in this House. But I know other members were in this Chamber and there were other members who, when the previous government said, you know what, we need to build an emergency channel for the people of Lake St. Martin and for Lake Manitoba, they probably sat across the aisle and said, no, that's not a good use of provincial money. Well, of course, we knew that it was for the future of this province, and now the minister wants to say that they're riding on those coattails. Well, I'm talking about money this year in this budget for a real emergency that could be coming in just a matter of weeks or months.

Why isn't this minister preparing in the way that he should be?

Mr. Fielding: Look, I think this government has made very clearly the fact that we're concerned that the federal government has put whole bunch of more consultation in the way of getting the work done for flood protection on Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba. That is clearly the case. We're willing to step up to the plate. In fact, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has made comments nationally on this issue. So we would love to spend as much money as we can, but there's extensive red tape and consultation that the federal government has put on, so I would encourage the Liberals when they come back into the House to address that.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to the member that indicating the absence of members from the House is not allowed by our rules, so a reminder to the member.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, so many questions, so little time. But I guess I'll just end on this because it isn't just flooding and health care that are top of mind for Manitobans. It's education. It's education at a time when this minister wants to go out and consult Manitobans asking for ideas, and yet the minister has once again shortchanged our education system.

So I'm going to ask: Did the Minister of Education come to the Minister of Finance? Did he beg and did he plead for an increase, a—finally to give an increase to the K-to-12 education system in this province, or did he just say, no, it's okay that our class sizes are getting bigger and there's more and more pressures on our teachers and our educators?

Mr. Fielding: We increased the K-through-12 funding by \$6.6 million from when we first came to office. We're spending over \$434 million more in the education system than ever before. If you look at the summary budgeting, the amount of money that is being 'spended' in the education system is going up by about \$134 million.

We're making appropriate investments. We want to invest so people can have great jobs in the future and get the training they need.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): As I said earlier in the question period portion of this morning that I do appreciate the opportunity to rise here in the House

to debate the, in this case, the BITSA bill, or the budget implementation tax statutes act. However, that's not what I expected to be doing this morning, and it comes as a bit of a surprise, I think—well, there's many things that may have come as a surprise over the last number of months by this government.

But, certainly, this particular process by which this bill was introduced was, at least from my experience, a bit odd and, you know, I think members here who have been around this place for a while would probably agree with me that I can't remember a time when a bill has been introduced; the minister, of course, the process minister stands up, says, I'm introducing a bill for this House. Our wonderful pages stand up, make sure that they get that bill; they distribute it to all members, and that's exactly what we were expecting to see yesterday when Bill 16 was brought forward here for the House.

Now, again, the process was a bit different. So, you know, took us a bit by surprise. You know, a member leaned over and said to me, where is the bill? Where—why don't we have the bill in front of us, and I said, I don't know. So we actually had to ask our wonderful clerks who always have the answer—always have the answer—or are able to get that answer very quickly, and in this case knew exactly why that was.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And that was because it hadn't been signed off on, I think is the—maybe the easy way to say it. But it hadn't actually been distributed to members, I guess, because the budget hadn't been distributed to members. So, here we were with a bill that was being introduced that talked about a budget that hadn't been introduced in this House.

* (11:30)

So, now, that's a—that's, you know, by—on its face—not that interesting, I don't think. I don't think that really would make many Manitobans, sort of, scratch their heads.

What might make them scratch their heads is to remember back and to go back in time and to think back to last year, when this—there was a whole bunch of back-and-forth, a big kerfuffle in this House, about the BITSA bill. And they might say, I remember members of the opposition caucus saying, where's the BITSA? Right? That's what they said, where's the BITSA?

And, in fact, not only did we say it over and over again in this House, we, in fact, forced this government to pause their agenda, to stop what they were doing and to say, oh, right, right. There's that small issue of telling Manitobans exactly what our budget entails and what kind of changes are coming.

So we held up the Legislature. We sat here into the summer. You know, I was quite happy to do so. I'm not sure everybody was so happy to do so, but I do appreciate the opportunity to come to the Legislature every day and represent the fine people of Concordia. So I was happy to be here on behalf of Manitobans, asking for those details.

And maybe even Manitobans might remember even further back and go, well, okay, so why was it such a big deal last year? And why did you hold the Legislature in for longer? Was there something that, you know, we weren't seeing, or what we were going to expect in the BITSA bill?

Well, in fact, this goes back to the first year of this government. So we're really taking Manitobans back here on a history lesson and reminding them that in the first year of this government they said, you know what? You know, we know that you elected us to protect the front-line services, but we're not actually going to tell you how we're cutting those services and how we're cutting the things that are important to you; we're going to try and hide them in the BITSA bill, in the budget implementation bill.

And so it was a kind of a bit of a deceit, I would say, that this government tried to perpetrate on this House, that ultimately caused—first of all, failed, in the sense of us being able to highlight those issues, but second of all, it—what it did was made us even more attuned to this sort of idea of using BITSA, not as a way of explaining and coming out up-front about what you're trying to do but, in fact, trying to use it for political purposes and trying to—I'm not even going to try that word, Mr. Speaker—trying to hide exactly what you're trying to do.

So that was then. And this is now.

And so this is a bit of a different process again. Maybe we were expecting BITSA to come in the wee hours of the night, in middle of June or July and the minister would say, no, no, no, you don't have to debate. You don't have to call any witnesses, you don't have to put this out to the public. In fact, you just need to get past this and let's get out for the summer and let's go. But they didn't do that,

Mr. Speaker. In fact, it was the first day, first day back in the Legislature.

So, you know, again, on its face, sounds like we got what we wanted. We wanted to see the BITSA bill. We now see the BITSA bill.

But it's not that simple because in reality, why the processes of the Legislature exist in the first place is to allow every member of this Chamber to debate at every stage of the process, the content and the intent of the legislation that's brought before us. And, certainly, I can tell you that every member of the opposition is relishing the idea of spending at least half an hour—and I could ask for leave—*[interjection]*—here today, Mr. Speaker. We could do—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, I hear the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), who, I just want to point out, you know, in his first year of being elected, one of his first opportunities in this House, we said, member for Flin Flon, can you, you know, I don't know, filibuster or speak out a bill? How long do you want me to speak? Well, unlimited amount of time. Oh, okay.

And he took that challenge and he ran with it, Mr. Speaker, and, in fact, performed admirably on behalf of his constituents. He came out and he spoke to the legislation and he talked that out.

Now, again, I'm very happy to do that on behalf of our party, if given leave. I know that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) may want to do that. He might struggle to get through, you know, a few hours on the BITSA bill. But I certainly would not. And I certainly am happy to speak for at least half an hour on this.

So this is what the process is designed to do, and so every member of this Chamber is relishing this idea that they would have at least half an hour to represent their constituents, to pick through every single budget line, every part of the BITSA bill, every single line—which I'm sure every member has dutifully done by this point, scrutinized every line, gone to the minister and said, minister, why is my hospital being cut while at the same time you're receiving more transfers from the federal government? Why is the ER being closed in my constituency while at the same time equalization is going up?

Maybe that's what the minister or the members have done; however, what I can tell you is that members on this side of the House have not had that opportunity. So we are excited to have that opportunity. I'm happy to kick off that process and to be the first one to bring that forward here in the House. But there is so much more that needs to be done to really pick apart this bill and to hold this government to account, and that is what my constituents have asked me to do here today. And as I said, it's no secret where I'm going to start. It's no secret where I'm going to end. It's no secret where I'm going to go every single chance that I get in this House, and it's to talk about the Concordia Hospital emergency room, because members opposite will not do it. They will not stand in this House; they will not defend their community.

Now, I've 'told' this story many times, Mr. Speaker, but I think it bears repeating, especially when we're in the last moments—the last, final days of the Concordia ER under this government. While there's still an opportunity to roll back the cuts, to say no, to stop these cuts—there's still time. Now, there won't be time after June 1st or what—any time in June, I guess. We actually haven't gotten a date of the closure—[*interjection*]—June 1st, the minister says—and that's sad. That's sad for my community. That's sad for the people of Concordia. That's sad for the people of Rossmere. That's sad for the people of Transcona and River East and Radisson. It's sad for the people surrounding our communities: Springfield and Lac du Bonnet, for southeastern Manitoba.

There are people who have been lobbying their—so, first, you know, as a bit of background, Mr. Speaker, the members of—the community members who were concerned about this started by doing what I did, and that was going directly after the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and saying, look, we know where this cut's coming from. There's no surprise about this; it's coming from the Premier's office. The Premier has a singular focus on a particular target. That's all he cares about: a budgetary target which the minister is trying to present an idea that they are on their way to meeting. That is the only focus that he has.

So when I—so when we went as community members and we rallied, we—letter writing. We had a petition in this House, Mr. Speaker, which I think was at that time was unprecedented. I'd never seen that many signatures brought at one time to this Legislature, and we went directly at the Premier asking him, please, begging him. I had him in

Estimates at one point saying, well, I know there's a real need out there. I know the community's growing. I know people are upset about this. So we thought, okay, there's some room here. He understands. Maybe he gets it that there's a problem.

We went after the Minister of Health. Again, you know, a member that I have respect for, that I do believe can show compassion at times that could find in his heart to understand the plight of people in our community. But did he do that? No.

So this was when the decision was made and, as I said, Mr. Speaker, many have heard the rationale for this or understand why this was done. The decision was made to instead talk to the direct representatives of these communities, to talk directly to your MLA.

*(11:40)

It's not some entity out there—the government. It's not some guy up there or down south somewhere, the Premier. It's an actual person that may have come from—that you may have known in your community before he was elected or she was elected, maybe know them from other circumstances, maybe your kids play soccer together. You know this person. They're supposed to be from your community. They're supposed to be somebody who gets it, to go to those people instead and to talk to them directly. And that was the strategy that was undertaken.

Now, this wasn't just the strategy because, as I said, those community connections were—would—should be strong and should be first and foremost in a politician's mind and so that we thought we'd have the most success. The reason that tactic was taken was because there was a precedence for this. This had been done before.

And, in fact, it's one of the ministers that this group of folks on the other side of this Chamber hold in high regard, as do many—I would venture to say—many on our side. And that is Bonnie Mitchelson—Bonnie Mitchelson, the MLA for River East, a former nurse who is elected to this House on a wave of Conservative victories across the city and across the province.

And she was brought in as a potential superstar. And, in fact, I—again, I would argue that she fulfilled that mandate. And she showed that she did have that potential in this Chamber. And she had a long and illustrious career, of which I was proud to serve with her, and I occasionally see her from time to time now and, you know, and greet her in high regard.

But what did Bonnie Mitchelson do, when she was elected to this House? Did she come in and did she sit in the back row and keep her mouth shut? Did Bonnie Mitchelson sit back there and say nothing to the premier of the day, when cuts were on the table once again under a Conservative government? No, she did not.

Bonnie Mitchelson stood up to the premier of the day, a premier who was at the time, immensely popular; had a huge mandate—this sounds familiar, doesn't it—had a huge mandate from the people of Manitoba to do whatever he wanted to do.

And what he wanted to do was he wanted to cut Concordia Hospital, unbelievably, without any consultation, just out of the blue, didn't campaign on it, didn't go 'noor-to-door', knocked on every door. I'm happy to cut Concordia Hospital. Just wait, elect me. I'm going to be the one that cuts Concordia Hospital. Nobody said that, nobody said that to Bonnie Mitchelson, nobody said that to the premier of the day, Premier Filmon. Nobody said that to any Conservative at the time.

And so Bonnie Mitchelson was elected. She was brought into this House and, all of a sudden, she's sitting around the caucus table and somebody says, we're cutting your community hospital.

Well, I can only imagine. Her head probably exploded. Who's this guy to say that my community should bear the brunt of the premier's single-mindedness on budget cuts and on cuts to health care? So she did what we are elected to do, what we've been put here by the people of Manitoba to do, to stand up for her community. And she did it. She did it at a time when the premier was at his most popular, when the Conservative government of the day, had the biggest mandate, ever, to do whatever they wanted to do. They were single-minded on their vision of cuts and, don't worry, they got there. Nurses felt it, health-care aides felt it. It was—the cuts still happened.

But she stood up for her community. She didn't say, look, premier, you're wrong. You can't cut. I mean, that would've been a great thing to do.

She couldn't stem the—she couldn't stop the tide of cuts that was coming. But what she could do was at least say, I'm a nurse; I'm an—I was on the front lines, I know the experts, I know the studies, I know the information. Don't cut Concordia Hospital.

And, unbelievably, not only was she successful—and she did, she did stop the cuts. I mean, there were other cuts, even at Concordia Hospital. But she stopped those cuts, those immediate cuts to close the hospital. But beyond that—and this is the part that I wish members would listen to very carefully. And these are—this goes to all these members in the backbenches, way out in the backbenches in some cases.

Is that the regular seats? I thought—anyway, I'm still learning the names.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: I figure there are some names that are more important to memorize, I suppose, than others.

But what I will say—and I will say this because I understand what it's like to out in the hinterland there—and you know what? You have a voice, too. You have a voice, too. You have a voice for your community. And you know what? In the next election, well, come what may, the people of Manitoba decide that.

But I can tell you that there's two things that are going to happen. Number 1, you can walk in or walk out with your head held high that you stood up for your community, you stood up against these cuts, you stood up against the Premier (Mr. Pallister). You were willing to make that hard decision and it's probably going to be uncomfortable. You might actually get shuffled a little further away to the other side of the House, where we know other members who have stood up against the Premier end up. *[interjection]* Well, that's fine. Is that the worst thing in the world? You're going to walk out of this place with your head held high.

But there's one other thing that could happen, and I think it's a long shot, but there's one other thing that could happen, and that is that you actually get the votes and get the support of the people of your constituency because they're going to say those cuts, they are—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —totally out of the blue. We have no idea where they were coming from. We don't support them. We don't know why they're coming. We don't know why they're targeting health care which is the most important.

But you, member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield); you, member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski); you, member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma); you, member for River East (Mrs. Cox) stood up for me and my concerns and my children and my family and for our hospital—our hospital. It's not just the hospital, it's our hospital, Mr. Speaker, and you stood up against this Premier and I'm going to, in fact, vote for you despite the cuts. Despite the damage that's being done, I'm going to vote for you. *[interjection]*

And, hey, well, like I said, I don't believe it could happen. Stranger things have happened. There might be some of these members who scrape by in the next election and actually hold onto their seats, and then I might even learn their names, Mr. Speaker, because I'd be forced to—*[interjection]*—another four years with them. I'd have to learn their names at that point. I—that's kind of at least the benchmark, right?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Wiebe: Fifth year—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —I got to study up and I got make sure I learn the names.

Of course, I'm joking, Mr. Speaker. I have all—I've a ton of respect for all members and I do mostly know all the names. Maybe not middle names, but certainly know their first and last name.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

There's a lot of heckling going on here, so I'm going to stop this right now and we'll all have some decorum in this Chamber.

Mr. Wiebe: So this is not a—as I said, this is not an issue—this is not an issue just about BITSA, about this—the rules of this House, the process in this House. It's not an issue about whether we think ideologically that health care is the most important thing or that cuts are the most important thing. That is even beyond the level, the high level that people in my community are experiencing these cuts. Okay?

And this is actually—this is where it comes from. It comes from average people, regular people.

So, again, I hear from, you know, party members on both sides all the time. I write an article in the

local newspaper. I get a ton of calls in my office or emails and I've got people who are saying, you know, one thing or saying another thing. Sometimes they're card-carrying party members. You know, I get that. That's the politics of it. That's the game of it.

But what I'm trying to say here, Mr. Speaker, is it's not a game. It's not a game, and how I know that beyond talking to all those people and beyond living in my community—like, the members opposite understand, right, that when I was three years old that—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Wiebe: And I want the members who have three year olds to just put this in their minds. Because, you know what? It wasn't until I had the three year old that it all really just jelled in my mind. Okay? When I was three years old—I've told this story in the House, but I do want to share it and I wanted to share it in a more, you know, constructive way in terms of, you know, the larger budget and the implementation and the implications of it. But here we are talking about Bill 16 and BITSA.

When I was three years old, an accident at home—a very serious accident. I—a window—a picture window in my house, I ran into it and it shattered—three years old. I cut my wrist—and I still have the scar for members who are interested in seeing that. It's about four inches—now it's four inches long. *[interjection]*

* (11:50)

I—like, I know there's the heckling and there's the playing of the games, but I just wanted to share this, okay, for members, for anyone that's listening, for anybody that actually cares about this stuff. Okay?

The scar right now is about four inches long. When I was a kid, I guess it would have been a lot smaller than that, but it was on my arteries, on my artery of my wrist. The glass was jagged, of course, and it sliced my wrist, and my parents had just left. They had just started driving away. I have an older brother and an older sister—quite a bit older than me. My brother's, I think, five—six years older than me, and so he was—he knew what to do. He took my arm; he wrapped it, and that tied a tourniquet.

My sister ran out the door down Donwood Avenue and chased after my parents, caught them before they drove away. They came back. I mean, I feel like I still remember this. I'm not sure that I do; I was only three, but I remember my dad driving

through all the stop signs and the lights. Near Donwood and Rothesay is where we lived and for those who know the neighbourhood. And I remember thinking, you know, Dad, don't drive so recklessly.

And they got me to that hospital and they saved my life. Again, I really never had much context for it. I mean, I knew how remarkable it was. I knew how amazing it was that I survived—but it wasn't until I had my own son and saw his little wrist at three years old—and was taken to the hospital. I didn't have a lot of blood to give. My brother always tells the story that when he brought me into the bathroom to grab my arm the blood was squirting onto the ceiling, believe it or not, through my artery, and that hospital saved my life.

Now, I hear members opposite say, well, you know, they do that kind of work elsewhere. I got my wrist, I was in Children's Hospital for months—well, not months—sorry—weeks—a very long time, and I was there with some really sick kids and a really tough time. But they got me to the hospital where I got treatment right away. And I tell the story not because it's particularly amazing; it's actually not, because when I went around and started talking to people, I heard this story over and over and over and over again. Not about cut wrists or other things, but it was about everything—everything that we go to that hospital for. And this fiction that it doesn't matter if it's in your community—you know, you can just drive another 25 minutes to St. Boniface. You know that you can go all the way over to HSC through traffic, so don't worry about it. Don't worry; you're going to get the health care there.

That doesn't mean anything to the people that come into Concordia Hospital that need it now, need emergency care now, that are saved by minutes. And, as I said, I'm not unique at all. I'm not unique at all. There are so many people that have experienced this exact same thing.

So Concordia Hospital is important, not just because it makes sense not to cut health care and, trust me, I get a lot of people—I just talk to them and they scratch their heads; they're bewildered. Why would you cut something like this? Why wouldn't you improve and invest in it?

But it's important because it actually makes a difference in our community, actually saves lives. It saved my life, and so members opposite should just know that we're just—we're down to the wire on Concordia Hospital. We are down to the last days,

and I just plead and beg members opposite to go to your Premier (Mr. Pallister), to go this Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) to say, look, the federal transfers have increased. The equalization is up. The Province has this extra money that the Premier wants to put into his priorities.

What about our priorities? What about my community's priorities? You'll be a hero—you'll be a hero. You won't be a hero on your caucus. You won't be a hero with your Premier. You won't be a hero at your next nomination meeting, I'm sorry to say, but you will be a hero with your constituents. You'll be a hero for everybody who's just saying, listen to us—this is so important to our community. It's not just about the dollars and cents. It's not about the rejigging. It's about what do we get in our community, what lives can be saved.

So members opposite have a choice, a real choice. We always say this: budgets are about choices. Budgets are about what you want to do with your money, and you want to communicate that to the people of Manitoba. Do we want to choose this or do we want to choose that?

That's what we want to ask them—*[interjection]* Really? Really? Is this what's important to your constituents? Is meeting the Premier's target what's important to your constituents? The choice could not be any more clear.

This year we're seeing the biggest cut to health care ever—the biggest health-care cut in a generation—longer, in fact, Mr. Speaker. This is the most significant cut that this government has ever made to health care, and at the same time my constituents are coming to me and saying, why can't this government just protect our hospital first and foremost? It's bewildering to them and it continues to be bewildering to me.

So, you know what? We're going to go through this process again. This is a, you know, this is a bit of a game, I guess, you know, like a game of politics. Hey, I like to play the game of politics too. So that's fine. We're going to play the game of politics. We're going to have a BITSA bill that has, you know, all of this stuff in it, and has all of these things that the government wants to say no, no, no, don't worry about that. We're just going to move through the process. Don't debate it; don't take your time; don't talk about it in a proper way and get some real information out of it and be given a chance to represent your community. Don't do that. Just move it through, just forget about it and rush it through.

That's the game of politics. That's the game they want us to play.

We'll play that game. We'll do what we have to do here in this Legislature, but I just implore the members opposite that when it comes to your humanity, when it comes to your constituents who elected you to be here, listen to them. Listen to your heart. Listen to what's really important to your friends and neighbours and the people in your constituency because, you know what? Like, I know how this works. You go knock on doors and you say, oh, we're fixing the finances; we're improving the economy. Yes, whatever—I don't even know all the lines—another thing I should learn, I guess, Mr. Speaker. I'm still studying, there you go—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: But instead of actually just talking, because it's really easy to just talk over somebody or just talk to somebody and say I'll walk away from that door. Oh, yes; they were on board; they really liked what I had to say. Listen to them. Listen to them and stand up for your constituents. Stand up for the people in your area. Stand up for health care and say no to this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and say no to this austerity agenda.

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

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): That'll be a tough act to follow. Unfortunately it wasn't an act; that's reality, and that's really what this government, this budget, miss. They miss people; they miss what their cuts have as an impact on people.

Now, maybe these people aren't the people they hang out with. Maybe these people that are going to be so negatively affected aren't people they care about. That's clearly obvious that it's not the people they care about when they bring in budgets that cut services.

They talked—this government—this Pallister government talks a lot about, well, we lived up to our promise. What about the other promises to not cut front-line services? They've forgotten about that promise because their only focus, the only focus they ever had from the day they first got elected was to cut 1 per cent off the PST. They made sure that in order to do that they cut front-line services that they promised—that they promised not to. When they knocked on their little doors and said: We won't cut

front-line services; we promise. Clearly, that is not what they intended.

* (12:00)

Now, part of the problem is—we've heard from the member from Concordia a very touching story about how it affected him personally. Will we, in the future, hear more stories from people—not just from financiers, not just from people that only care about the bottom line, but will we hear more stories from people who've been affected by these cuts? People who can't get to an ER, people who can't access the services they need, people who don't have a house to live in, people who don't have anywhere to go because this government, again, has cut funding for people—things like Rent Assist. Because why? Because they don't care about people. They care about dollars and cents only, not about people.

So, you know, we can spend a lot of time listening to their buzzwords and their catchphrases. This government—this Pallister government, they have a lot of catchphrases and buzzwords that they hope will catch people's imagination and allow them to hide what they're really doing.

We've seen previous budgets where people said, oh, that wasn't as bad as we thought it was going to be. But then we look at what they did in reality. Maybe they didn't cut the budget for health care last budget, but then they underspend that budget by a quarter of a billion dollars. So that is, in fact, not living up to their promises. *[interjection]* And I hear the member from Thompson, he's got a lot to say all of a sudden. So we'll get to him and about when he didn't have a lot to say when things were happening in his community and the people that elected him wanted him to stand up for them, and he sat quietly and said nothing.

You know what? As cuts take place in health care, they affect his community. They affect everybody's community.

When we talk about hospitals closing, ERs closing, that affects us in the North as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Contrary to what the member from Thompson might believe, people from his community, people from my community land up going to those emergency departments that are backed up because we don't—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —have proper health care in the North and that member doesn't stand up and fight for it.

So let's get back on track.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: The member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle)—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —will be only with us for a short period of time, so let's not get too hung up on him ignoring his constituents. We can talk about other party MLAs that kind of ignored their constituents as well. And why is that? Well, because a lot of the members opposite don't listen to people. And that's really what a government should be about. It should be about the people of the province that you're here to represent, the people of the province that you're here to do the best job you can do for. Not the bankers. Not the corporations.

Yes, we need business; yes, we need corporations, but we need people. We need people to be able to prosper and survive, and this government's continued cuts and hacks at everything that affects people's everyday life is not allowing people to get the level of service that they need, that they require, that they want.

You know, they talk a lot about what they heard knocking on the door. Well, I wonder what some of them will hear when they knock on the door this election—whenever it happens to be. You know, will they hear, as some of these members that are with us for a short period of time say, well, they're going to say thank you? No, they're not, because when one of their constituents can't get to see a doctor, can't get into emergency—when one of their constituents lands up in worse shape because of this government's cuts, they will not say thank you. They will say you didn't do what you said you were going to do, which was protect the services that people depend on; you didn't stand up for people.

So let's get down to, really, some of what we're here to talk about. We're here to talk about BITSA, right, the budget implementation. So here we're—again, they're talking a lot about the finances and they're talking a lot about this. But everything—I shouldn't say everything; I'll correct myself. A lot of what they've done since they've gotten elected is to attack democracy—and, certainly, I can remember my friend from Concordia talked about a speech I gave once where I went on for quite a while. And one of the things that was in that, one of the themes was an

attack on democracy. They limited people's ability to choose whether they wanted to join a union or not. This government has been attacking democracy since they got elected because they say one thing, they do another. They hide the facts of what they're doing. They didn't release things that should've been released. We've seen budgets that said one thing and did another.

We really—hopefully, the people will understand what really is taking place here—[*interjection*] And I hear some of the members opposite saying, well, we don't want to hear any more about the people. And that's the problem, isn't it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is they really don't care about the people, and yet it's people in our constituencies that are going to be affected, that have already been affected by this government's cuts. Every time I turn around up in Flin Flon—I know the people in the communities there are affected negatively by what this government has done. Now, they claim that, we never cut Northern Patient Transportation. And I can line people up that will tell you very specifically that they did, that they have, that the amount that people get covered for going to health care, health care that should be a universal right. I recognize that we live in the North; we're never going to have exactly the same access as people in Winnipeg have. But people should be able to get to the health care they deserve, and we hear continually from people that that is not happening, that, no, we haven't cut the budget; we've just had in-year efficiencies, they call it.

So what are those in-year efficiencies that they talk about? Well, part of the in-year efficiency is, no, you can't go to the doctor because we're not going to pay for Northern Patient Transportation for you to get there. Part of the efficiencies are, oh, so you're 90 years old, blind and deaf. No, you can't have an escort to travel to Winnipeg with you because we don't care; we're just about saving money; we're not about providing service to people. And I can't say that often enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that's what's missing from this government's whole outlook is people. They're all about numbers. They're all about making sure that they've got the money rolling in, that the bankers are happy, that the corporations are happy. Don't care about the people that are affected by this.

* (12:10)

So we talked a little bit about some of the health-care cuts that we've seen and, you know, that's part of the problem. And people that listen to question

period—and believe it or not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are more people actually listening, and I certainly appreciate the effort that's been put into having question period available online. And, if you lived in the city of Winnipeg, you could watch it on cable TV. If you lived in the city of Thompson, you could watch it on cable TV. If you lived anywhere else outside the city, probably not. But I appreciate the fact that we're trying to make—that some people are trying to make the actions of government more transparent. So that people who want to can actually follow along with what our government is doing.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And I can tell you one of the things that the people that I've talked to, the people that come and talk to me, about what they see on question period is, well, you present a document that says that there's lots of money being spent on a particular thing than there was last time. You present a document that clearly has those numbers on it. Now, sometimes we have to go through freedom of information to get those documents, to get those documents, to get those numbers, to get those facts. Sometimes those numbers and those facts are contained in things like budget documents that governments release. So, when we use those numbers to talk about cuts, we have all kinds of government ministers that stand up and say, no, no, no. That's fake news. That's not a cut; that's an increase. That's not a this, that's a that.

People that are paying attention—and I really wish that more people would pay attention—understand that there's something fundamentally wrong with the answers we get in question period because they're not answers. That, what is the government hiding from the people? Never mind hiding it from the opposition parties that are asking the questions, what are they hiding from the people? They're hiding the facts that, in fact, they are cutting. They are, in fact, not spending the money that they used to spend on health care. That affects people.

They're not spending the money on things like plowing snow. Funny story: I was driving down to Winnipeg in January, over a highway that clearly hadn't been plowed. It's not what we used to call normal winter driving conditions, but apparently that's the new normal. Manitoba government vehicle was in the ditch, getting towed out by an individual simply because the people that plow the snow, I'm told, were told that no more overtime, because it only snows between the hours of 8 and 5. If it snowed all

night, don't try driving somewhere in the morning. You'd better wait 'til noon.

You know, I can—I've lived in Flin Flon for 45 years. I don't remember the highways being closed, but they are now, because instead of getting the plows out, they close the highway. Well, how does that affect people in the North that are trying to get maybe to a medical appointment? Well, they don't get there. And then they wait months and months and months to get the next medical appointment. Does the government care? No, because it's all about dollars and cents. Well, we're going to save money on snowplows.

One of the things that they did last year, I guess, is that they cut some of the funding for northern airports. They don't plow the snow on the runways on the weekends anymore because, of course, nobody ever needs a medical evacuation on the weekend. Oh, they say, well don't worry about that, we'll call somebody, we'll find somebody to come out. Well, in fact, that doesn't always work as easily as what this government would like to pretend it does. So, once again, we see more cuts that are affecting people; people's lives; people that depend on some of these services that aren't there anymore.

A lot of things that the government does, again, are under the cover. We don't see it on the paper up front. So the Minister of Education now has hired former Filmon government henchman to come in and finish the job that, according to quotes that have been attributed to this individual, he didn't think Filmon and company went far enough in the cuts that they foisted on the people that took us many years to get over with the education.

People, particularly in the North, are very concerned about what will happen with this government's review—review, they call it, of education. Will it mean that maybe Flin Flon doesn't have a school board anymore or that they get amalgamated with some entity from somewhere else that doesn't give us the opportunity to have a say locally in what takes place? That certainly is one of the things that they're concerned about.

The other thing they're concerned about is, again, the government is telling them you can't spend money to necessarily have the number of educational assistants you need, and you can't have the class size you need so that all kids can get ahead, because they've done away with the small class size initiative—[interjection]—and the minister will get his

opportunity to stand up and speak about what a wonderful thing cutting services to people are. When he gets his opportunity to stand up and speak—and I look forward to him telling us how providing less services to people, how providing less educational opportunities to people is going to be the right answer, because I talk to people every day of the week that know that that's just not right. *[interjection]*

Again, the minister seems to have a lot to say sitting in his chair and, I don't know. Perhaps, maybe the Minister of Education should actually go and talk to people, people out in other constituencies that are going to be affected by his potential cuts. You know, he talks about, oh, you only went to the Union Centre. Well, clearly, he doesn't understand what happens in a constituency like Flin Flon that's spread over 10 or 15 different communities that don't have a union centre—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: Maybe they should, because if they did maybe we wouldn't have ministers like this doing the things that they're doing to people. So I can't stress that enough, that everything that this government has done has hurt people.

I should correct that—I should correct that. They've looked after some people. Former premiers, they've made sure they looked after them; privatized certain government air services that—gave it to their former friend, their—well, maybe he's still their friend, I guess, not their former friend. So—*[interjection]*—no, he's certainly not mine. You're absolutely correct. Because I fly on his airplanes to get back and forth and I—I'm scared, Madam Speaker, that if he happens to get—if that corporation happens to get the contract for Lifeflight, that they'll operate it with the same kind of schedule they do for normal air, which you don't actually depend on getting where you need to go, because Comair may not get you there when you want to get there. On a sunny day they may not fly, which is very unfortunate.

So, you know, they talked about one of the reasons that—*[interjection]*

* (12:20)

Madam Speaker: Okay, order. Order, please.

Mr. Lindsey: So, when the two ministers, who clearly don't have anything better to do, standing here laughing and joking rather than paying attention because once again, they don't listen, right? That's

the problem. They don't listen to people; they don't listen to opposition MLAs; they don't even listen to their own MLAs, which is the problem with this Premier (Mr. Pallister) is he only listens to himself, I think. So maybe he doesn't even listen to himself.

So let's talk about infrastructure for a minute, shall we? So they promised all this things they were going to do for infrastructure. When they got elected, did they stand up and promise to cut \$670 million from infrastructure spending? I think they didn't. I think that's not what they promised people. You know, we listened to the Manitoba Heavy Construction talk about what's the effect of the cuts in infrastructure spending. And, of course, it's somewhat self-serving because they want their members to have jobs. They want their members to work, which is too bad. This government isn't really interested in a jobs strategy that requires people to go to work. But there's more to that than just they want work. They recognize that by underspending on infrastructure today, you'll pay the price tomorrow.

Now, as much as I like to talk about how the government's ignoring the North—which, don't get me wrong, Madam Speaker, they truly are—but they're also now ignoring the city of Winnipeg. They're ignoring the infrastructure needs for the city that is growing and going to require more. And this government talks about, well, there's only one taxpayer, so we can't, you know, tax him, her, them. But what they've done is they've offloaded what the Province used to fund for things like infrastructure onto municipalities and left them to pick up the tack—the slack from the same taxpayer.

So, when they did away with the education tax credit—well, they didn't do away with it completely; there's a convoluted formula that some homes will now pay upwards of \$700 a year more on their property tax. So they're going to cut the PST by 1 per cent, and their claim—which you can believe it or not; it's up to you; time will tell—is going to save \$500 a year. But, in the process of cutting, it's going to cost homeowners potentially \$700 more a year, and they're fine with that. People in my constituency are not, because they do understand simple math, that the \$700 you're going to make me pay is certainly more than the two to five hundred that I might save with the PST cut.

So we've seen things like highway budgets cut. We've seen things like plowing snow on the highways cut. We haven't seen the end of it yet, though. I'm sure there's going to be more—more

things that will impact people, that may or may not be in the budget. I know my home community is very concerned as to what may be happening with the mining reserve fund. Thompson, clearly, was not successful in being able to access that fund when jobs disappeared from that community. The City of Flin Flon would like to be able to access some of those funds, going forward, to help them plan for a future potentially without mining. So we haven't really seen the government step up and say, yes, there'll be funds available from that fund, from that very fund that was created specifically for that purpose.

So we look at—[interjection] Okay, well, if Flin Flon's not going to have mining anymore—for a while, anyway—what else will there be? Well, health care on a regional basis could be part of something. But what has this government done? They've cut obstetric services, which then leaves a whole whack of people that come to the Flin Flon General Hospital from the Saskatchewan side having to travel four or five, six hours to go to Prince Albert.

We've seen them cut the obstetric service that then expectant mothers have to leave their families to go and stay in The Pas because they can't give birth at home or closer to home. This affects people in Cranberry Portage. It affects people in Snow Lake. It affects people in Flin Flon, Creighton, Denare Beach and a whole whack of other communities out there, Madam Speaker. Does the government care? No, no they don't, because it's only about people and they don't care about those people. They care about money and that's it.

So what can we expect next from a government that doesn't care about people? Well, I shudder to think, because once again we see a budget that, certainly, when you start going through the numbers you see some of the places that they've cut: infrastructure spending, cut; health-care spending, cut; budgets for things like workplace health and safety inspectors, cut—cut—cut—cut—cut. My friend from Point Douglas is quite impassioned when she talks about the cuts that are going to affect people in her constituency.

Maybe these cuts don't affect people in some of the other communities—[interjection]—and I hear the member from Thompson beaking off again. I guess none of these cuts have affected his community. Oh wait, some of them did. The fact that they were unable to access the mining reserve fund did affect his community and continues to affect his

community while he sits and says nothing. Well, he says nothing publicly, and I don't know what he says when he's in caucus, but, clearly, whatever he says isn't working so.

We need to really get this government to focus on people ahead of money because everything that this government has done—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —so far has negatively affected people. People will remember that, Madam Speaker. People will know, come the next election whether it's April or October 2020, people will know what this government has done. People will know that they lived up to one promise at the expense of every other promise they made, and people will know that in order to cut that 1 per cent they abandoned people. They abandoned the people in this province. They don't care about people and people will remember that, and I'll make sure when I'm knocking on doors I'll tell people that they don't care about you.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, Madam Speaker, it's good to have the Conservative members heckling. At least they're listening.

I would note that not a single Liberal has listened to a word that anybody's said today. In fact, the Liberals haven't been listening since the end of question period as far as I can tell.

It is strange, indeed, that the day we thought we'd be starting to debate the budget isn't actually the day that we're starting to debate the budget. It's now, perhaps, the fourth or fifth time that this government has done that. They've introduced a Throne Speech or they've introduced a budget, and the next day they kind of lose focus and decide they want to do something else.

I remember the very, very first Throne Speech this government brought in. We thought ok, well, here we go. We'll have a chance to debate, and they said, no, we don't want to debate that. We want to bring in a government resolution. It was about the Trans-Pacific—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —Partnership. They couldn't even hold focus in their very first days in government on getting the job done and, sadly that has continued.

I remember one time, I can't remember if it was the Throne Speech or the budget speech. They

interrupted debate so they could bring on a motion to try to force us to rejuvenate a bill that they had forgotten to call to committee—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —in the session before, which makes no sense at all.

So, indeed, today they've decided to call the BITSA legislation and we do know that last year either they forgot to bring on BITSA or they just didn't want to let people know—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have 28 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

CORRIGENDUM

On March 6, 2019, page 499, first column, third and fourth paragraphs, should have read:

Ms. Lathlin: The minister says she would stop new placements while she conducts her so-called review of this agency. The minister's lack of openness and accountability of this review is a cause for concern. Families need answers and the public needs to know this minister's not trying to sweep this issue under the rug. The lives of our children are at stake.

Has the minister stopped new placements at B & L or have new kids be—placed in their care?

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, March 8, 2019

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