

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

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table today the following reports for the Department of Sustainable Development: The Sampling Report, surface soil levels in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2007 and 2008; and the Manitoba Sustainable Development Annual Report, 2016-2017.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Infrastructure. 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 minister please proceed with his statement.

Cable Ferry Gilbert Laugher and PR 373

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): I rise today to celebrate the successful launch over the weekend of the new Cable Ferry Gilbert Laugher on the Norway House Cree Nation. I would like to thank our member of the Legislative Assembly from Thompson for attending the launch events as a guest of the community on behalf of our government, along with members of the Laugher family.

The 90-foot-long, 15-car ferry is now in operation on the Nelson River and is named after Gilbert Laugher, who was born in Norway House in 1928 and was one of the first ferry operators at sea falls.

Layette Laugher, Gilbert's daughter, in attendance indicated, and I quote: This is such a wonderful tribute to my dad, who worked tirelessly for years providing a critical service to our community. My dad would be so humbled and impressed with this new vessel, she said.

The \$3-million ferry replaces a 40-year-old ship and is a critical link in joining the people of Norway House to all of Manitoba. And the ferry's opening on the weekend coincides with the recently completed resurfacing of Provincial Road 373, which is now complete from Highway 6 all the way to Norway House.

It is investments like these that are essential to the health and prosperity of Norway House while opening up the area to tourists who want to experience all the incredible opportunities the community and the North in general have to offer.

When asked about the opening of the new ferry, Norway House Cree Nation Chief Ron Evans said, and I quote: I would like to applaud the commitment of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government for assisting in the development of our community with the new ferry, he said.

He continued: This will help us as we continue our community and economic development, facilitating tourists and others to visit the North and our community.

Madam Speaker, our government is pleased to make this investment in the North and to provide safe, reliable ferry access for the community of Norway House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I am pleased to see that the new Gilbert Laugher cable ferry, which began construction two years ago while we were in government, has successfully made its long journey across Manitoba—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —and is now operational on the Nelson River.

The ferry honours the late Gilbert Sandy Laugher, who was one of the first ferry operators and operated the ferry for much of his life, providing a critical service to the community.

This important piece of transportation infrastructure has seen over 123,000 passengers and more than 61,000 vehicles this year alone, demonstrating the importance of connecting these isolated communities to their surrounding areas.

I am relieved to see that this government followed through with our commitment to help this northern community maintain its tie to the rest of Manitoba. It's too bad they fail to show an ongoing commitment to the North.

Investments like the new Gilbert Laugher cable ferry in Norway House are essential to ensure the long-term viability of northern communities, but this is something the Premier (Mr. Pallister) doesn't seem to understand. Maybe he should take a train up to Churchill to see the problems isolated communities have first-hand. Oh, but he can't because the railway line has been left abandoned, leaving families and seniors isolated in Churchill without affordable access to the rest of the province.

While Churchill residents continue to struggle to connect to the rest of the province, the Premier continues to struggle to look north. He has washed his hands of what is happening in the North as these communities continue to suffer.

Northern Manitobans don't deserve a premier who washes his hands of his responsibility to deal with issues up north. They deserve a premier who will show a real commitment to building and maintaining the critical links that connect our northern communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Klassen: I was so relieved to read the minister's quotes: Investments like the new cable ferry, as well as the recently completed resurfacing of Provincial Road 373, are essential to the health and prosperity of Norway House and the surrounding area.

I'm really glad they recognize that connections are essential for health and prosperity for First Nations. Wouldn't it be great if even more reserves can thank the government for something, for anything? Connecting our northern communities is one of the most important steps towards northern development and revival, whether those connections are ferries, roads, airports or even Internet.

In the south we take so many of these connections for granted. We hop in our cars and drive anywhere and we have ready access to anything we need. We have free Wi-Fi almost anywhere;

our cellphones can answer most questions we may ask—most questions, not all. I'm still waiting for the PC duty-to-consult framework to yield results on Google.

Imagine how difficult it is to keep professionals like doctors and teachers and nurses in these communities that lack the basic necessities of transportation, mobility, running water and connectivity.

I know we're asking for the world, Madam Speaker, but everyone must remember this land on which the Legislature sits, sits on our traditional lands.

I'd like to congratulate the Nelson House community and the Laugher family on the new ferry.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Operation Clean Up

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): There's a tremendous program in the Selkirk constituency that has operated every open-water season for the past 18 years called Operation Clean Up.

Operation Clean Up exists because Selkirk native Robert Belanger saw an environmental and aesthetic problem that needed a resolution. During his regular travels on the Red River between Lockport and Netley Creek, Robert had observed all types of debris, from household garbage, furniture, vehicle parts, fishing line, discarded along the banks. Something needed to be done.

In June of 1999, Robert approached the municipalities of St. Clements and St. Andrews, the City of Selkirk, Manitoba Hydro, Public Works Canada and Manitoba Conservation. All agreed that garbage was the problem in their respective areas, but they had no way to deal with it. From these meetings Robert began to grow Operation Clean Up.

Currently, approximately 80 45-gallon drums are anchored to the ground, trees and posts at public access locations. Operation Clean Up staff empty these drums and clean the riverbanks of trash. Since the spring of 1999, Operation Clean Up has removed over 700,000 pounds of garbage from the banks of the lower Red River. That's approximately 40,000 pounds of garbage every summer.

Operation Clean Up is the epitome of a successful community response to environmental stewardship, education, outreach and partnership development.

I thank the various stakeholders who have supported Operation Clean Up over the years. Their contributions have enhanced the quality, aesthetics and safe utilization of our great Canadian heritage waterway, the Red River.

Robert Belanger is in the gallery with his wife Tammy and daughters Jordan, Lise and Rielle. I also understand it's Rielle's birthday today, so happy birthday Rielle.

Thank you Operation Clean Up and thank you Robert.

Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to have the names of the sponsors of Operation Clean Up entered into the record.

*(13:40)

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

Operation Clean Up Sponsors: RM of St. Clements, RM of East St. Paul, RM of St. Andrews, Gerdau Ameristeel, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Sustainable Development, Department of Public Works.

Families Participate in MMIWG National Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Last week the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself sat through testimonies at the national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We supported in awe and wept alongside as the Houle, McIvor, Daniels, Catcheway, Cook, McPherson and countless other families offered Canadians, in both grace and dignity, song, narratives, teachings and visual testimony in honour of their loved ones.

There are no words to impart the level of determination, courage, resiliency, strength and love MMIWG families members have for their loved ones. We witnessed the meticulous care shown MMIWG families by elders and helpers like Thelma, Leslie, Sheryl, Belinda, Bernie, Velma, Mary, Angie, Karen, Sandra, Brenda and 'Hilden', just to name a few.

We acknowledge the humble support of Regional Chief Kevin Hart and Elder Stan LaPierre, who didn't appropriate families' or indigenous women's voices or space, but, rather, offered protective space in the back of families and women.

We appreciate the dedication shown by Commissioner Michèle Audette, who sat with

families in both public and private testimonies. We acknowledge the national inquiry staff.

There had been much commentary, both positive and negative, in respect of the national inquiry on a range of issues. This is families' only opportunity to have their loved ones' disappearance or murder documented in the official Canadian record and demands that we go above and beyond in ensuring the best possible processes and recommendations.

The member for Point Douglas and I will continue to work for MMIWG families and command justice for their loved ones. We send our immense love to MMIWG families across the country.

Miigwech.

Austin Manitoba Celebrates Canada 150

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I had the pleasure of attending many fairs, parades and special events throughout the province of Manitoba this summer and many in Agassiz, my constituency. But there's one event that stands out amongst all the rest.

Today I rise to recognize and acknowledge the community of Austin. Several community members are present here today, and I welcome them: Ed Heppner, the president of the 'auster' chambers of commerce; Bill Warren, councillor for the RM of North Norfolk; Don Makinson, Lions Club member; Kelvin Bueckert, president of the Pine Creek Players theatre group; and Cecil Jones is the parade organizer and Lions member.

Now, these are just a few of the many volunteers that orchestrated and participated in the planning and preparation for Austin's July 1st, Canada's 150th anniversary celebration.

This event was like none other. So many local organizations came together, each participating in some capacity, with Lions Club and skating club hosting pancake breakfasts, the wildlife club held a supper, Pine Creek Players performed a production reflective of the community as well as Canada's history.

There were many activities for all ages and a parade that captured 'cranadian' history and well as—led by horse and carriage with locals impersonating royalty, and, of course, like usual, they had the most fabulous July 1st fireworks display. But what was most spectacular was to see the participation of the

whole community coming together and working together to make this such a fantastic weekend for everybody that attended.

I would like to sincerely thank the many organizers and volunteers for their hours of work and enthusiasm for this event. Congratulations to the village of Austin for hosting such a fantastic weekend celebration.

Please join me in 'welcking' these people here today.

Samantha Rayburn Trubyk

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Samantha Rayburn Trubyk, the president of the Little People of Manitoba. Earlier today we passed a resolution that the provincial government be urged to increase opportunities and promote awareness for persons with dwarfism and dedicate October 25th annually as dwarfism awareness day.

I thank all MLAs for supporting this initiative, especially the MLAs for St. Vital, for St. Boniface and Lac du Bonnet, for speaking so positively about it.

Samantha, or Sam, as she's known, is an energetic public speaker and the human resources manager for Price Industries. I first met Samantha during work on the bill to put physical size and weight under the Human Rights Code. Samantha and the Little People of Manitoba embraced our efforts. It was apparent that the bill was needed to address discrimination against people with dwarfism. It also became apparent that we needed to create greater recognition and awareness of people with dwarfism. Aspects of our society are designed without consideration of those with dwarfism, including the placing of light switches, garage door openers, wash basins in public washrooms and sinks.

Samantha is a strong advocate for a barrier-free society for those with dwarfism as well as being dedicated to increasing public knowledge, creating positive awareness, changing negative misconceptions and increasing opportunities for people with dwarfism.

Today, I invite all MLAs to applaud Samantha Rayburn Trubyk.

Dauphin's Bronze Statue Series

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, Lieutenant-Colonel William Barker, VC, was born

and raised in Dauphin. In the First World War, Billy was a fighter ace, registering 50 combat victories and received the Victoria Cross in 1918, on his way to becoming the most decorated air serviceman in Canadian history.

On September 29th, my colleague, the MLA from St. Norbert, and I attended a statue unveiling in Dauphin's newly renovated CN Park, the fifth in a series of bronze statues that reflect the heritage of a community rich with important Canadian culture. Each statue is assigned a guiding principle which is meant to represent the foundations upon which the Dauphin community was built and the principles which continue to guide humanity today.

Dauphin's bronze statue series also offers a unique narrative about the history of Dauphin.

The first statue symbolizes optimism, which represents the hope and optimism held by the Ukrainian immigrants who settled western Canada and the Dauphin region.

The second statue symbolizes curiosity, which propels exploration, investigation and learning throughout human life.

The third statue symbolizes perseverance and is dedicated to the Ukrainian pioneer women whose legacy is embedded in Canadian culture from sea to sea.

The fourth symbolizes compassion and honours the deep faith, prayer, courage and dedication of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate and their mission to Canada and to Dauphin in 1928.

In honour of Canada's 150th birthday, the fifth statue of courage and of Lieutenant-Colonel William Barker was unveiled, which commemorates his achievements and represents the courage and sacrifices made for this country.

Congratulations to Tourism Dauphin and everyone who contributed to this worthwhile and ongoing project.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you. I would like to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery where we have with us today His Excellency Dr. Andzej Kurnicki, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Canada, and 'alser'—also honorary consul Dr. Czarnicki, and we—

on behalf of all of us here, we welcome you to our Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care Services Government Intention

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today, we saw the great health-care-premium flip-flop. First, the Premier said there would be a health-care tax, some \$900, \$1,200 a person. Now he's saying—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —not so much. The Premier spent over a month trying to figure out something we told him on day one: health-care premiums do not match up with the values of Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (13:50)

Mr. Kinew: We also know this Premier promised to not cut front-line services in the last election, yet physiotherapy—cut, occupational therapy—cut, rural EMS stations—cut, urgent-care centres—cut, mature women's health centre—cut.

How can Manitoba families trust this Premier to protect the services they care about the most: the health care for their families?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, perhaps due to the member's inexperience or the—simply the fact he's unwilling to accept the responsibility for being part of the team that raised taxes after promising not to, he's attempting to portray himself as a defender of the interests of taxpayers.

This, Madam Speaker, is going to be a frustrating attempt for him given the record of the previous NDP government, which not only raised taxes after promising not to, but refused to produce evidence of listening to a single Manitoban.

Madam Speaker, we'd listened. We've listened and we've heard from Manitobans in an open, democratic, participatory process from over 37,000 Manitobans. And, as opposed to the previous government that refused to listen, we are.

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

Mr. Kinew: It's clear that on the issue of health-care premiums, the Premier has changed his position

more than a pickerel on a dock. We not—yet we not—we ought not forget that this is all a diversionary tactic to set the stage for cuts.

These cuts will hurt Manitoba families. Manitoba families deserve—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to be healthy. Manitoba families deserve a premier who will help them stay healthy at home. What they don't need is a premier who is trying to spin them into believing that these aren't cuts.

Will this Premier commit to not cutting front-line services?

Mr. Pallister: Not only, Madam Speaker, did the previous government jack up taxes in virtually every category—more than any other Canadian province—in their final years, but they debased the system of health care in our province to the point where it was literally broken, where in most measures we were 10th of 10 provinces.

While they were charging a premium, a deferred health premium, a deficit annually, accumulating and doubling our debt in just a six-year period. And, Madam Speaker, that is a health premium by any description, and we will all in this province be paying for the mismanagement of the member's party as government.

Madam Speaker, we will fix the system they broke.

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

Mr. Kinew: There's another flip-flop. He's still thinking about health-care premiums, even in that answer.

Just over a year ago, the Premier said he would not cut the services Manitoba families rely on, and yet here we are today: the Premier reveals his intention to cut \$100 million from our hospitals and schools each year. That is a broken promise, Madam Speaker. The Premier promised to protect our services, but he has done the opposite.

Manitoba families are telling him that they want emergency rooms to stay open, they want EMS stations to stay open, they want access to the care that they need after surgery. But they see a premier that doesn't seem to care. Manitobans don't want a

premier who drags his front bench out in front of the media to try and spin Manitobans. They want him to change course.

Will he back off his health-care cuts?

Mr. Pallister: The member may know what they want in the bastions of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, but he didn't listen to 37,000 Manitobans like this government did, Madam Speaker.

We've invested over half a billion dollars more than the NDP government ever did in health care, Madam Speaker. That doesn't sound like a cut to any logical Manitoban. Manitobans know that health-care costs are rising, they know the federal government has become less an equal partner, less a junior partner, now a mini-partner in funding health care.

Manitobans know that health care is this government's No. 1 priority because we stood up for them and defended health care while the members opposite were sitting on their hands and catering to Justin Trudeau's wishes.

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

Changes to Physiotherapy Services Impact on Patient Care

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, Madam Speaker, I was sad to read about Meridel Archambeau's story in the media this morning, and what she has to say contradicts the Premier's assertions. She puts it very bluntly: The government is putting money ahead of patient care in every aspect of our health-care system. Those are her words.

Now, Meridel is an 81-year-old who needs surgery on both of her knees, and because of this government's cuts she won't be able to access physiotherapy that she needs after that. A sad irony of her situation is that she actually volunteers in the very same physiotherapy setting that she will no longer have access to.

Because of this Premier's cuts, the cuts that we have established in this House that he is directing, the services won't be there for her when she needs them.

Will the Premier listen to Meridel and put care first and back off his cuts?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I know and I sympathize with the pain that Manitobans experience

when they wait for health-care treatment, Madam Speaker. My mother waited for over a year for knee replacement surgery, and I sympathize with Mrs. Archambeau and the pain she's experiencing while waiting.

The system we inherited had the eighth longest wait times for knee replacement in the country of Canada. Waits were an average of well over a year. And the system that we're working to build, Madam Speaker, together with front-line workers and listening to experts, will improve on that ranking and will make sure that the devastating pain and doubt and fear experienced by Manitobans as a consequence of the total incompetence of the previous administration will be lessened, and that we will minimize that pain and that we will provide a better system that is fixed, as opposed to broken as it was under the NDP government.

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

Mr. Kinew: I am glad that the Premier can express his sympathy for Mrs. Archambeau, but unless his compassion drives him to act and restore the physiotherapy that's being cut, it doesn't seem like he cares very much at all.

Without publicly funded services patients like Mrs. Archambeau may have to go without physio. We know that a good physiotherapy regimen seems to reduce the risk of re-injury for people after knee surgery. This means that the Premier's cuts to physiotherapy mean patients like Meridel could be more likely to be injured again later on, which could mean repeat hospitalizations, potentially even repeat surgeries. Not only does this cause people like that pain, it's also not good for our health-care system.

What due diligence did this Premier do? Can the Premier share with this House any analysis he has which compares the impacts of his cuts compared to the impacts that we might expect from repeat hospitalizations and surgeries?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, the member's really good at speaking about compassion. Let's talk about the compassion lacking in a system that breaks down. Let's talk about the pain it causes people. Let's talk about the fact that the previous administration was totally incompetent at improving wait times and, in fact, lengthened them in almost every major category; that hip replacements went to eighth ranking in Canada—eighth longest waits; knee replacements, I referenced; cataract surgery, 10th out

of 10, dead last; and emergency room waits, Madam Speaker, as you know, the longest waits in Canada bar none, and this man sits opposite us today and speaks of compassion.

Madam Speaker, compassion is deeds, not words, and the deeds we are working to achieve will improve the system for all Manitobans, will give them better services sooner where they need it, and when they can get it from a qualified professional in Manitoba who wants to live here and stay here. That's the key to improving our system. The No. 1 way for anyone to address a problem is to admit they have one. That member can't get to step 1.

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

Mr. Kinew: Publicly funded physiotherapy and occupational therapy helps Manitobans stay healthy at home after they leave the hospital. It makes it less likely that our family members will have to return to the hospital again. That makes their lives better. It's also much easier on our system to deliver care to them when they're at home rather than in the emergency room.

* (14:00)

An orthopedic surgeon at Concordia Hospital told the media also, again, knee-replacement surgery patients need physiotherapy to heal.

Madam Speaker, if these patients don't get the care that they need, we can expect them to have to return to the hospital again later on.

Will the Premier table any analysis that he has that takes into account the impact of cutting physio compared to the impact on patients and follow-up hospitalizations and repeat surgeries?

Mr. Pallister: I'm disappointed in the member's performance thus far, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: He continues to ask the same—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —reworked questions, demonstrative of a lack of understanding of the problem, that were asked over the last number of months by previous questioners.

An Honourable Member: Same old, same old.

Mr. Pallister: Same old, same old—nothing new, Madam Speaker.

His leadership campaign was fraught with promises: over \$1 billion of promises to make things better for Manitobans, but not a dollar of savings, not a dollar of reallocation, not a dollar of indication that he understands the nature of the unsustainability of billion-dollar annual deficits, Madam Speaker.

And we spend the second most of any province per capita on health care. We've added a half a billion dollars to the previous record NDP budget on health care, but we are committed, Madam Speaker, beyond spending more, to getting better results, something the previous administration failed to do. I know the member opposite doesn't want to associate himself with that dismal record, but he owns it now, unless he wants to disassociate himself from all the friends around him who caused this devastating damage to our health-care system to occur.

We will fix what they broke, Madam Speaker.

Health-Care Premium Government Intention

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Ever since the Premier (Mr. Pallister) surprised Manitobans, including, obviously, lots of members of his caucus, a few weeks ago, New Democrats have been hearing from Manitobans in all corners of this province who told us they do not want the Pallister government to impose a health-care premium. And today, just hours before we're going to debate an opposition motion opposing a health-care premium, the Premier suddenly called a press conference. He held a hastily arranged press conference downstairs to announce that he won't be proceeding with a health-care premium—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —this term.

And I know this is upsetting for the members opposite, but the real question for Manitobans concerned about their health-care system is, in light of this: What service will the Health Minister be cutting next?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, it's interesting for the member opposite to talk about shocking a caucus. That member—to talk about shocking a caucus and having a hastily called news conference, because I remember the member opposite shocking a caucus—his own caucus—and

having a hastily called news conference in the very same location and saying into the mic, in front of all the assembled media, our government, the NDP government, has stopped listening. What hypocrisy.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, it is wonderful to know the member for Steinbach, my friend, can still lean on the horn. But that kind of answer is not what Manitobans—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —who are concerned about deep cuts to our health-care system expect to hear from a minister of the Crown.

We've already seen a government which has been prepared to close urgent-care centres; that's been prepared to cut emergency rooms; that's been prepared to cut the very services that Manitobans depend upon. Only they know why they wanted to institute a health-care tax, and only they know what cuts are coming down the line.

Will this minister, unlike yesterday, actually answer a question and say what's being cut next?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, I would have hoped that defeat in an election would have caused the member opposite, my friend from Minto, to reflect a little bit on his style and his plans. His style before the election, when they were in government, wasn't to talk to Manitobans. It certainly wasn't to listen to Manitobans. It wasn't to survey Manitobans. It was to impose the GST—or an increase of the PST, the highest tax increase in Manitoba history, on Manitobans without any consultation. In fact, not only without any consultation, but doing the opposite of what they said during the election.

I can understand why the member opposite is confused because we consulted, something he and his former government refused to do, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: We know that the Premier has personally signed off on the cuts to the health services that our families and our seniors depend on, and we know it's the Premier calling the shots. We know it's the Premier who's deciding which cuts are being proceeded with, and now he's telling Manitobans, just wait, there will be more.

The Premier has a choice: next time the cuts come to the Cabinet table, he can say yes or no.

Will the member for Steinbach, the Health Minister, perhaps put some of his verbal exuberance to good use and say no when the Premier asks for more cuts to our health-care system?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The members opposite have an impossible task, Madam Speaker, ahead of them. They are—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —struggling to rebuild their image while we rebuild the services in the province of Manitoba, Madam Speaker. They are struggling to fix and repair the damage they've done to themselves while we fix and repair the province of Manitoba and the damage they created.

And now the member for Minto claims he's a defender of the taxpayers' interests. He can't even defend his own caucus colleagues, Madam Speaker. He says, let's have a resolution this afternoon, from the NDP, that we promise not to raise taxes. Sounds vaguely reminiscent to me of a promise they made to the people of Manitoba, a far more solemn vow, that they made when they went to the doors, they knocked, they looked people right in the eye and they said, vote for us; we promise that we will not raise taxes.

Madam Speaker, they're just reminding everybody with the resolution today of the broken promises of the past that they would commit again, given the opportunity they will not get.

Marijuana Legalization Regulatory Plan Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, today's announcement shows Manitobans are split when it comes to how they want to access cannabis once it's legalized in nine months.

The government survey has actually left us with more questions than answers, and the clock is ticking.

One thing is clear: it will be the Premier who decides. So will the Premier tell the House today: How will cannabis be distributed in Manitoba once it's legalized?

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

member for the question. And, of course, I had the opportunity to be on a conference call and a—in Manitoba over—I think there were almost 8,000 people on the call. We've been listening to Manitobans as to what they want to see, and we will—as we mentioned earlier today in our news conference—we will be rolling out that distribution and the regulatory mechanism over the course of the next few weeks.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Pallister government has had well over a year to prepare for the legalization of marijuana, yet this government has no plan and is dragging their feet while stoking all kinds of unfounded fears. And whether or not the Premier (Mr. Pallister) likes it, marijuana will be legal in nine months.

When will they tell Manitobans what their plan is?

Madam Speaker: Order.

*(14:10)

Mrs. Stefanson: And the false accusations of the members opposite are not surprising, Madam Speaker, but I will say that we are one of the first provinces to bring forward legislation, The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act, which I remind members opposite that they voted against.

We have also put out an expression of interest. We received many applications in that—the—upwards of 60 of those. We are listening to Manitobans. We will continue to listen to Manitobans, unlike members opposite, who never listened when they were in government.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Manitoba needs leadership on this issue. Families have concerns about who will have access to cannabis, its cost and what safety measures will be in place, and it's the minister's job to come up with a balanced strategy, yet her plan still remains unclear nine months into legislation. Time is running out.

Will the minister tell the House what the legal age for marijuana consumption—what it will be in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, in fact, Manitoba has shown leadership on this. We were the first to introduce The

Cannabis Harm Prevention Act, which deals with various issues and safety and health concerns for Manitobans when cannabis is legalized in our country and in our province. We have taken many steps. We've never stopped. We've put out the expression of interest. We continue to work with Manitobans. We're listening to Manitobans to see what they want to see in terms of a distribution network here in Manitoba with respect to cannabis.

So we will continue to listen to members of our public, to members in Manitoba, unlike members opposite, who never did that, never consulted with Manitobans when they had the opportunity to do so when they were in government.

Manitoba's Financial Outlook Impact on Health-Care Services

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): We learned today that the trial balloon floated by the Premier around health-care premiums was punctured by the people of Manitoba. They simply said no to health-care premiums.

They pretend that they're listening, so will they now listen further—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —and listen to the people of Manitoba when they say no more cuts to health care?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I thank the member for the question.

We've made progress on behalf of all Manitobans in the past year. I was hoping this would finally be a question from the member for Fort Garry-Riverview on the subject of the release of the public accounts for the year 2016-2017. In that year we showed, of course, as government, a reduction of the deficit of \$147 million of a summary line. It is the first time since 2003 that a provincial government has not exceeded its planned budget.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, Madam Speaker, we know that the Finance Minister has a really poor record when it comes to numbers. We're really not too sure if he's got this one right either.

The Conference Board of Canada is projecting a slowdown in the Manitoba economy similar to the great recession. Thousands of jobs were already projected to be lost in the North with the—which

the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of Manitoba has the temerity to say, oh, that's old news.

The Premier's cuts to health care has resulted in job losses for workers in the health-care sector.

Can the Finance Minister tell us today: Will he listen to Manitobans, will he protect health care and keep those jobs for Manitobans?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for Fort Garry-Riverview for the question.

That member understands that we are right now continuing in the most significant prebudget consultative exercise in the history of Manitoba. That initiative includes in-person meetings all over the province. It includes this portal, this online survey that we have put out for all Manitobans to take part in. It involves telephone town hall meetings. The difference, of course, between their approach and ours is that we have committed to listen.

These are significant issues that are facing Manitobans. We don't pretend to have all the answers, but we are listening and we are making progress on behalf of all Manitobans. Over time we will fix the finances, we will repair the services, we will rebuild our economy.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, I just note as an aside, Madam Speaker, that the Finance Minister says that with less and 'leth' enthusiasm every single time he says it.

Cuts to CancerCare, cuts to the Mature Women's Centre, cuts to physiotherapy: these hurt Manitoban families and they make life harder for Manitoba families and they cause a great deal of anxiety for Manitoba families.

So I want to ask the Finance Minister: Will he stop flip-flopping on these issues? Will he invest in health care? Will he create jobs, and will he start governing on behalf of all the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: That member knows the situation. He knows that, because of his own government's overspending for more than 10 years, we're faced with an almost \$1-billion debt service charge each and every year that takes money away from front-line services.

I wonder if that member is even acknowledging that there are storm clouds even now gathering, even today the Free Press writing an article saying that Manitobans are concerned about the rising threat of

interest rate for their own finances. And I know that the article goes on to say that there could be a reckoning.

Well, we are there with good management, with this balanced approach going forward, showing results for Manitobans and making good investments in front-line services. We're going to continue on that course.

East-Side Road Construction Request to Table Five-Year Plan

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I was very worried when I learned of the Cabinet shuffle. The former minister of Infrastructure had said that his office would be presenting their five-year plan for the east-side roads in this session. I had called all the leaderships to say congratulations. But I was shocked to hear that they knew nothing of any five-year plan. Madam Speaker, that news speaks volumes to this government's duty-to-consult framework, yet again.

The remote communities have the highest prices for food, supplies and housing materials. We paid gravely from our health.

Can the new Minister of Infrastructure table the five-year plan regarding the construction of the east-side roads?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question, and I'd like to point out to her that we just announced today that we have spoken with over 35,000 Manitobans and consulted with them on the budget. I would like to point out to her that the five-year plan is also something that we are working on. We are consulting with Manitobans, and something Manitobans learned today: we are listening.

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

Wasagamack First Nation Airstrip Construction Inquiry

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Wasagamack members are tired of the decades of neglect, so much so that they have taken matters into their own hands by clearing out a portion of their land for an airstrip. The airstrip was a part of ESRA's plan, and they still said yes to voting ESRA down.

Imagine a child suffering from appendicitis and knowing that child has to suffer in pain and wait

until it's safe to travel on the lake to get to the plane to fly an hour to get to medical help.

Can the new Minister of Infrastructure state what this government will do to support Wasagamack's need to have an airstrip built in their community?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): The same organization that the member is referencing, and that's ESRA, they spent \$50 million, Madam Speaker, and got less than 50 miles.

Madam Speaker, I want to assure this House that we are looking at the way we do our roads in Manitoba and we will ensure them that they will get good roads for the money spent.

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

First Nation Communities Road Construction Proposal

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Wasagamack said yes to voting ESRA down in hopes for this new PC government.

Last year a stop-work order was presented to two of my First Nation communities who used their band funds to build a road joining their communities. They did this to have access to our traditional lands. They have presented their business case well in advance of the winter ice-road season, and are still awaiting an answer from this new government.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure please give us an answer today: Will this government support these two First Nations with their proposal to build that vital link between their communities?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, I believe all Manitobans agreed that it was time for ESRA to be shut down, and even the auditor went in and said it was colossal disaster.

* (14:20)

I would also like to point out to the member that under our Minister responsible for Indigenous and Northern Relations we've had one of the most robust consultations ever. In fact, today we spoke about some of the activities that are going on up north, and we are hearing chiefs say that under this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government they've never been consulted like they are being consulted right now. And we will continue to do so.

Dauphin Manitoba Infrastructure Investments

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Our government is committed to investing strategically in infrastructure across this province in order to grow our economy and build a strong, thriving community. We also committed to ensuring that investments are strategic and deliver value for taxpayers' dollars while ensuring that municipalities have a fair say.

Can the Minister of Municipal Relations update this House on how our commitment to strategic infrastructure is benefiting my constituency of Dauphin?

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

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'd like to thank the member from Dauphin from that great question.

Our government is keeping our commitment to invest at least \$1 billion annually in strategic infrastructure, Madam Speaker. In fact, Budget 2017 includes a commitment to invest \$1.7 billion, the highest level of infrastructure investment in Manitoba's history. That includes a support for a number of projects announced this year in Dauphin region alone: \$890,000 for phase 2 of rural waste-water expansion in the RM—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —of Dauphin; \$225,000 for road improvements in the city of Dauphin; \$125,000 for waste-water improvements and \$250,000 for community hall renovations in the RM of Gilbert Plains.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Security Guards Wage Increase Inquiry

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, security guards didn't get the pay raise they were expecting on October 1st because this government decided to impose another Pallister pause. Meanwhile, workplace injury statistics show that security guards are six times more likely than average to need time off work due to workplace injury.

Can the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade inform the House why his government froze the wage that provides security guards with a fair wage?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I would indicate to the member that it's inappropriate to use a member's name as he did within his question, and I would just like to remind him that that is not an acceptable format of raising a question. And, you know, the member doesn't necessarily have to respond right now, but just for future use: that is not acceptable language to say Pallister pause in any of our questions.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Madam Speaker, this government indexed the—Manitoba's minimum wage to inflation. That provides stability for both workers and for businesses.

We've also raised the basic personal exemption, which pulled nearly—just over 2,000 people off the tax roll, something that the previous government failed to not only raise the personal—basic personal exemption, they froze it where it was.

We're in mid-Canadian average in terms of minimum wage. We believe in a strong economy and good jobs for all Manitobans, and that's what we'll continue to work for.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Security guards have to pay out of pocket for equipment, training and maintaining a current criminal record check. Industry competition means that many security guards rely on the government wage increases for the only pay raise they'll receive.

Will the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade listen to people who rallied outside today and give security guards the wage increase they deserve?

Mr. Pedersen: Those people that the member was talking about also have to pay a widened PST, courtesy of the previous government. They have to pay more in PST, courtesy of the previous government. They pay—they now pay PST on their house insurance, which they never had to do before, courtesy of the previous government.

We will work to make Manitoba more affordable for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Lindsey: The people, the Manitobans who rallied outside the Legislature today, work hard to protect Manitobans. They're worried that this government isn't just pausing the wage increase they deserve.

Will this government, today, commit to keeping the legislation that provides security guards with a fair wage and, more importantly, to following that legislation?

Mr. Pedersen: Unlike the previous government, we will work to make Manitoba more affordable for all Manitobans, no matter where they live, where they work, whether it's in the North, whether it's in the south. No matter what their job occupation is, we are going to make Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada in our first term. Thank you.

Children in Care Client Case Concern

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): A young Brandon boy is struggling with a supportive loving home. After a string of criminal incidents this 12-year-old boy was arrested after stealing a car, driving it into a bus, which—the bus landed into a building. Thankfully, this boy and everyone on the bus was—were okay.

Madam Speaker, more than a year ago, the Minister of Families promised to develop a plan for this boy. Clearly, no such plan was made. The minister's inaction left this boy unsupported, which has resulted in this youth being incarcerated.

Why didn't this minister take steps to ensure that this child was provided the support that put him on a path towards a better life?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Well, we know what the opposition's record was when it comes to children in care, and that's why this government has proposed a comprehensive plan to reform the CFS system to make sure children, the children similar to what you're talking about, have appropriate care. And that's why we have a strong plan to provide permanence, to provide more flexibility for agencies, to provide a better care plan for young children that are supported—vulnerable Manitobans that are supported, here in the province.

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

Neighbourhoods Alive

Mrs. Smith: This boy is not the only case. There are several cases within Manitoba. Under the act, you cannot identify these children. Supports for young people within this community is a crucial way to keep them happy, healthy and safe.

In my community alone, in the North End, there's been organizations whose funding have been cut that have drastically impacted the supports that are provided to these youth to stay out of care, in their homes, in supportive, loving places.

Will this minister admit that the Neighbourhoods Alive! cuts mean less support for the youth in these communities?

Mr. Fielding: What the child and family services area—the child-welfare system, needs a strong plan, a strong reform plan, after 17 years of neglect from the NDP government. And that's why this government's put forth a strong comprehensive plan that's got support by agencies. It's got—it's supported by the indigenous community. In fact, I think it may have support from the opposition, if I understand from the news requests.

This is a strong plan. It's going to lead to less children in care, less days in care and a better upbringing for vulnerable Manitobans.

* (14:30)

Mrs. Smith: I'd like to just say for the record that having kids that—[interjection]—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Smith: —live with—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The time for oral questions has expired.

As I had already recognized the member prior to my comment, I will acknowledge her.

Mrs. Smith: I just want to remind the member that the—kids in care have continued to increase under this government. They have this plan that they're going to hide some numbers under putting kids that are living with their family members as not being—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —accounted, which means they give up their right to support these kids.

Will the minister do his part with these children and reinstate Neighbourhoods Alive! funding so that kids can stay safe in their communities?

Mr. Fielding: I think one thing that we all can agree in this Chamber, that there's way too many vulnerable children in care in the province, and that's why this government is taking strong action.

I do find it fairly rich from a government—a previous government—for 17 years that saw the amount of the children in care go up by 85 per cent and the amount of days in care by over 70 per cent while in office. That, in our opinion, is something that needs to change, and that's why our government is—introduced a comprehensive reform plan to reduce the amount of days in care, reduce the amount of children in care, provide more flexibility for agencies to provide services and supports that make a difference in terms of early intervention and prevention.

That is what we're doing. We hope the opposition will follow our lead and support vulnerable Manitobans and children.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Transit Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017, section 88(8) repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states, quote, the municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue.

(2) Public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment,

improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017.

This petition is signed by Megan Locke, Nelva DeRochers, Hannah Dudenaur 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.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2000 section-17, section 88(8) repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states the municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or a rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue.

(2) Public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Northern Patient Transfer Program

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) Manitobans recognize that everyone deserves quality accessible health care.

(2) The people of northern Manitoba face unique challenges when accessing health care, including inclement weather, remote communities and seasonal roads.

(3) The provincial government has already unwisely cancelled northern health investments, including clinics in The Pas and Thompson.

(4) Furthermore, the provincial government has taken a course that will discourage doctors from practising in the North, namely, their decision to cut a grant program designed to bring more doctors to rural Manitoba.

(5) The provincial government has also substantially cut investments in roads and highways, which will make it more difficult for northerners to access health care.

(6) The provincial government's austerity approach is now threatening to cut funding for essential programs such as the Northern Patient Transportation Program, which was designed to help some of the most vulnerable people in the province.

(7) The provincial government has already announced it would cancel the airfare subsidy for patient escorts who fly to Winnipeg for medical treatment, which will be devastating for patients with mobility issues, dementia, or who are elderly and need assistance getting to the city.

(8) The challenges that northerners face will only be overcome if the provincial government respects, improves and adequately funds quality programs that were designed to help northerners, such as the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the absolute necessity of maintaining and improving the Northern Patient Transportation Program by continuing to respect Northern Patient Transfer agreements and funding these services in accordance with the needs of northern Manitobans.

And this petition has been signed by many northern Manitobans.

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The taxi industry is regulated to ensure that there are both the provision of taxi service and a fair and affordable fare structure.

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

(4) The regulated taxi system also has significant measures in place to protect passengers, including a stringent complaint system.

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

(6) There were no consultations with the taxi industry prior to the introduction of this bill.

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans, many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

(8) The proposed legislation also puts the regulated framework at risk and could lead to issues such as what has been seen in other jurisdictions, including differential pricing, not providing service to some areas of the city, and significant risks in terms of taxi driver and passenger safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Transit Funding

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017, section 88(8), repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states, quote, "The municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue", unquote.

(2) The public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017.

Signed by many, many, many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act of 2017, section 88(8), repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states: The municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue.

Public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services

and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, of 2017.

Signed by Kerry St. Germain, Torrie Sato, Marilyn Coverdale, Lea Dumont and many, many other Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017, section 88(8) repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states, quote, "The municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in the amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue," end quote.

(2) The public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing its carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantee—sorry, let me start again, Madam Speaker—number 3, eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The member for Kewatinook, on a point of order.

Ms. Klassen: In my ministerial statement I thanked the Nelson House First Nation. I would like the record to be amended. I meant Norway House. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. I would indicate that that's not a point of order, but we thank the member for correcting the record.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Yes, on House business, Madam Speaker.

On October 31st, the House will consider the private member's resolution sponsored by the member for Kewatinook titled Recognition of Manitoba First Nation Leadership as Governors in their Own Rights.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced for private members' business on Tuesday, October 31st, 2017, the House will consider the private member's resolution sponsored by the member for Kewatinook titled Recognition of a Manitoba First Nation Leadership as Governors in their Own Rights.

Madam Speaker: The House will now consider the Opposition Day motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew).

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Is it possible to ask leave for just a quick recess?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have a five-minute recess? *[Agreed]*

I would just like to inform everybody that there will be a one-minute bell to call members back into the House.

The House recessed at 2:49 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:55 p.m.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The House will now consider the Opposition Day motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

I will now recognize the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you sincerely, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to not institute any health-care premium in Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: The Opposition Day motion that we are proud to bring forward today says that we call on the Legislature to demand that the provincial government not have any health-care premium. Though for greater clarity, I'd like to say any health-care premium ever. That's the position of our caucus, that's the position that we're advocating for here.

We know that some three or four weeks ago the Premier (Mr. Pallister) went out into public and floated the idea of a health-care tax. And we know that there was criticism well throughout the media. We know that this was an issue that many Manitobans spoke about, whether that was at the hockey rink or at the Tim Horton's, or just in social circles. People seemed to be nearly uniformly opposed to the Premier's idea of a health-care tax.

And we were very clear from the first day that this idea was floated, from the first few minutes after the announcement was made, that we were completely against the idea of a health-care premium in Manitoba. We don't think a health-care tax is right.

What's more, the reason why we say this is because the idea of a health-care tax does not match up with the values of the people of Manitoba. People want health care to be strong, to be universally accessible, but also for the funding of it to come from general government revenues. We don't think that the health-care premium is the right approach to take.

So we had this idea floated some three or four weeks ago and we had numerous musings about it until today when the Premier dragged his Minister of Health and a few other Cabinet members to a press conference in the—in front of a very sheepish-looking

Health Minister, announced what any Manitoban could have told him a month ago—that there won't be a health-care tax in Manitoba.

Now, the Premier added a proviso in his first term, which I take to be a strong directive that we have to work really hard to ensure that he only gets one term as Premier. And so that's the plan. And our opposition to a health-care premium will remain the same whether it was our first term or second term or third term. It just doesn't match up with the values of Manitobans.

Now, we had some fun in the question period today characterizing the Premier's flip-flop, compared it to a pickerel flipping and flopping back and forth on a dock, Lakeside, might be in the constituency of Lakeside like my good friend, or, you know, maybe it's up in Gimli or what have you, but I think the mental image is clear there of a fish floundering.

And, as much fun as I had with that, Madam Speaker, I think it's important to understand the following. This whole media conflagration over the past three to four weeks about a health-care tax in Manitoba has been a diversionary tactic ushered in by this Premier to set the table for more cuts to the health-care system.

* (15:00)

We know that that seems to be the way that this government is moving because of the way that their rigged online questionnaire seems to push any potential respondent with leading questions towards trying to accept health-care cuts. We know Manitobans won't accept those sorts of cuts to the services they rely on, whether it's physiotherapy, whether it's occupational therapy, whether it's the EMS stations in Grandview or Oak Lake or in other places across the province. Whether it's the cuts to the emergency rooms here in Winnipeg or to the urgent-care centre at Misericordia, we know that Manitobans do not accept those cuts, won't accept those cuts, and yet when they look to this Legislature, they see a government that doesn't seem to care and that still seems to be trying its best to try and spin the people of Manitoba into accepting less services.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And it's very interesting to me, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that not only did the Premier

flip-flop on the issue of a health-care tax, that we're also looking at this issue of a seemingly growing list of health-care cuts some 18 months after the Premier (Mr. Pallister) promised in an election not to cut front-line services. And, yet, we have seen that physiotherapy, needed by people such as Mrs. Archambeau, who was featured in the media today, is being cut; occupational therapy services are being cut. My colleague from Minto is doing his best Where's Waldo impression trying to find out where the Dauphin MRI is—looks like there's a delay there. We know that EMS stations across rural Manitoba are being cut. I've spoken to people in the constituency of Arthur-Virden who are upset at a potential closure for the Oak Lake area. And so those seem like cuts to front-line services to me, but, of course, we will let the people of Manitoba decide for themselves the verdict on that one.

But what we're saying here today is quite simple, that we want to welcome the Premier and his front bench to the right side of this issue on health-care premiums, but we'd ask them to commit with both feet, not just take that tentative first step towards ruling out health-care tax for today, but to just say once and for all that there won't be a health-care tax in Manitoba. We're comfortable saying that, and so they ought to as well.

We know that health care, generally speaking, that there is a sustainability challenge there. There are many Manitobans with unique and complex health-care needs, whether that's renal health, whether it's diabetes, whether it's MS. And we think that Manitobans deserve a government that is compassionate and willing to provide the care that's needed to keep those people in good health. But the best way to do that is to not try and cut our way out of the health-care challenges we face, but rather to invest earlier on to shift the focus of health spending towards primary prevention, meaning: diet, nutrition, exercise, injury prevention, to invest more in mental health services, to invest more in access to prescription drugs for seniors and other Manitobans who need them. Only by making those early upstream investments that we are going to be able to help Manitobans stay healthy at home.

And, when we help a Manitoba senior or a Manitoba family stay healthy at home, that improves their quality of life. It allows them to continue participating in the community. It allows them to continue leading fulfilling, meaningful lives. An ancillary benefit is that it also helps our health-care system become more sustainable. Because as we

help people stay healthy at home there is less need for hospitalizations, less need for trips to the emergency room and other interventions in the health-care system, which are both very intensive impacts on the quality of life of a patient, but also very expensive places to deliver care. And so, on all fronts, it seems to be that investing in a strategic, thoughtful, compassionate care model here in Manitoba is the best way to meet the challenges in our health-care system.

However, when we look at the government here, we see leadership that seems to want to cut, cut, cut, and when they grow weary of adding to this list of health-care services—

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

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): It's an honour for me to speak on the Opposition Day motion that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to not institute any health-care premiums in Manitoba, and after a decade of NDP debt, decay and decline, Manitobans elected our Progressive Conservative government to fix the finances, to repair the services and restore our economy.

Our prebudget consultations are an important conversation, and we want to hear from all Manitobans. Unlike the previous government, we consult in good faith, and the feedback we receive will be an essential part of the decisions we make.

In our latest prebudget town hall meetings, access to timely, quality and affordable health care were some of the most important concerns expressed at the meetings I attended. To put things in perspective, under the NDP, Manitobans were waiting far too long for care. They were staying too long in hospital and often needed to visit multiple locations to access the care they needed. The past 17 years witnessed a severe decline in the health care provided for Manitobans while the NDP spent more in providing health-care services than any other province.

However, the problems in our health-care system not only persisted, they worsened. One of the problems Manitoba experienced was that we had the longest ER wait times. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was not, and never would have been, an effective health-care system if action was not taken.

When elected, we were faced with some of the longest ER wait times in Canada for diagnostic

workups and surgeries. In some 'cashen', some patients would wait months to see a specialist. While they waited, the added stress placed extra burdens on an already compromised patient.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Steven Lewis described the fundamentals of patient-centred care in 2009. In his description, he reminds us, a dissatisfied customer is one whose needs have not been met. And the essential insight is to recognize this as a failure and reflects failures of disrespect, failures of inconvenience, failures of poor communication and fragmentation.

There are reasonable assumptions associated with the schematic of a clinical sequence. In our publicly funded health-care model, these are: the patient is seen in a timely fashion; the provider is trained to provide the services and is working within the scope of their training; the provider is part of a collaborative team and can share care when required; the drivers of decision-making are patient-centred; the tests are actionable and chosen wisely; talking and treating are linked and the subsequent permutations and combinations are clinically sound; and finally, the outcome is good and measurable.

Ultimately, the perceived return for the patient on the investment in health care pivots on the first and last bullets, those being that they're seen in a timely manner, and they're having a good, measurable outcome. Although Manitoba was striving to provide the same level of care in all hospitals, it was identified in our health-care system that this had resulted in an expensive, unsustainable model that was failing patients and could have resulted in patient harm.

* (15:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our prebudget consultations provide Manitobans with the opportunity to share their views on a range of options for sustaining health-care services. We have heard loud and clear from Manitobans during these meetings, and there will be no health-care premium in Manitoba.

The prebudget survey showed that Manitobans generally believe we are on the right path and want us to stay on course. They agree that reduced wait times and new equipment are the priorities, and the way to fund these spending increases is to find cost savings within the system. Raising taxes was the least popular option selected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue on the path we're on to repair the services of the province and our health-care system. Together with our government's efforts to move towards balance, and with input from everyday Manitobans, we can make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada.

In 2013, the NDP ignored Manitobans and took away their right to vote on major tax hikes by implementing the highest tax increase in a generation by the expansion and subsequent raising of the PST. The NDP left behind a very serious financial situation. After a decade of decay, spending more than we have as a province has led to historic debt and higher taxes for Manitobans. This is the NDP's health-care premium: higher taxes. Right now in Manitoba, Manitoba debt has reached over \$37 billion which has effectively doubled within a decade, and currently each citizen's share of the debt is over \$28,000. This is one amongst the highest in Canada. Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*interjection*]

I see that the NDP's notes are currently being written by the author of Chicken Little. The sky is falling. Everything they have to say is doom and gloom in the House. We remember what happened to Chicken Little in the end of the story.

An Honourable Member: It's falling.

Mr. Lagimodiere: The sky is falling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans need to know that under the previous government Manitoba spent more per capita than any other province in Canada on health care. Yet, as a province, we had the longest ER wait times, the longest wait times for diagnostic services, and the longest wait times for surgery. All told, we ranked the worst in the country for health care, and yet we spent the most per capita on health care. It was obvious that something was wrong. Given our level of spending, we should have had the best health-care system in Canada.

Our government is addressing these unacceptable statistics. Regional health authorities are already implementing some of the recommendations brought forward by previous commissioned reports. We are focusing our limited resources on areas that matter most, providing health-care services Manitoba needs in a sustainable manner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with a possible—higher interest rates coming, Manitoba's financial situation will only get worse—not better—unless more steps are taken to improve our fiscal situation. Decisions today will impact all Manitobans and our future prosperity.

We need to know the top priorities are managing government spending and balancing the budget. This is what we're asking Manitobans in our consultations.

A key topic of our prebudget consultations has been the issue of ensuring we have a sustainable health-care system for all Manitobans. Our prebudget consultations are an important conversation. We want to hear from Manitobans, unlike the previous government. We consult in good faith and the feedback we receive will be essential in the part of the decision-making process.

Currently, all provinces and territories receive transfers from the federal government. In December, discussions ensued around the health-care transfer payments. The opposition sat on their hands and would not support us when the federal government announced decreases in transfer payments. Manitoba's federal transfers have declined by \$34 per person since 2009. This is a significant impact for Manitobans, especially when it comes to funding health care, which accounts for approximately 40 per cent of our government expenditures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even with the new targeted funding promised by the federal government, overall health funding to Manitobans will be about \$2 billion less over the next 10 years. I don't see the opposition rising to help us get that funding back from the current federal government. Even with the new targeted funding promise, we face significant shortfalls. This falls considerably short of what the evidence suggests is required to meet Manitoba's health-care needs. Currently, we spend \$4,803 per person on health care. This is the second highest amongst all provinces.

Manitobans deserve better. As it is, over the last five years—this will continue to grow if less—unaddressed—

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

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It's a pleasure to stand and debate this resolution this afternoon brought on by our new leader, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew).

You know, I listened very carefully not only to our leader, but also to the member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere), because I really wanted to gauge what I should say by whether the government was going to support this Opposition Day motion or not. And after listening carefully to every word the

member from Selkirk said over the past 10 minutes, I'm still not sure what the government's going to do on this motion. And I have the feeling, as I look in around the Chamber today, that they're not sure what they're going to do about this motion.

And I must—I have to admit, I feel some sympathy for the backbenchers in the government caucus who we know are excluded from decision making, who are excluded from the discussions and who were just as surprised as we were on that day back in mid-September when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) strolled out in front of the media and announced that he was going to consider a health-care premium in Manitoba for the first time since 1973. And I appreciate for the members opposite that would not have been an easy day. And I'm certain the weeks afterwards have not been easy in their own communities as people, as they have to us, have expressed their view on the idea of a health-care premium.

So I will spend my time talking about why this is the right motion, and I hope that members opposite will vote in support of this motion. Perhaps we can make this unanimous this afternoon and once and for all make it clear that Manitobans do not have to worry about the prospect of health-care premiums suddenly returning after more than four decades of being abolished by the Schreyer NDP government.

We want to ensure that no premium or fee is required for Manitoba residents to be eligible for their health-care services—not now, not ever. Manitobans are clear: they want health care to be universal and they want it to be affordable. Access to health care for Manitobans should be based on need, not on their ability to pay. And it was that very same idea that drove someone named Tommy Douglas—Canada's greatest Canadian of all time, as voted by Canadians from coast to coast—who, next door in Saskatchewan, started, first of all, a hospital insurance program, which, over the course of time, became a medicare program in the province of Saskatchewan and eventually was adopted by the federal Liberal government and is now the case in every province across this country.

And what is a health-care premium? Well, it's a throwback. It's a throwback to an earlier time in our country's history before there was universal, free health care. And if you look at a throwback, you only need to look across the way at the Premier of this province who, off the top of his head, decided to pick out something that had been abolished in Manitoba

in 1973 and mused about possibly taxing Manitobans, making their—charging them a fee for health care that we have all relied upon in the ensuing 34 years.

And this government didn't say a word about that during the election campaign. This government misled Manitobans about protecting the public health care that families count on. And they've done this, first of all, by threatening the health-care premium, but also by cutting health care across the province of Manitoba—and we know they're just getting started—and also by privatizing health care, by taking services out of the public system and now either making Manitobans pay out of their own pocket for those services or by government resources now having to flow outside of the province of Manitoba to hire health-care companies from the province of Ontario to supply services that were previously being supplied within the Manitoba public sector.

* (15:20)

And what of this health-care premium? Well what is it?

Well, what did the Premier (Mr. Pallister) have to say?

Well, what did he say—again, to the complete surprise of the government members—he said it's most certainly a tax increase there's no doubt of that. And I know the Premier often seems to pretend the things he says in this Legislature—that are reported in Hansard—weren't his words, perhaps he'll try that again with these words. This is what he told Global News on September 13, 2017.

And it's interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year my friend, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) brought forward a bill which would prevent health-care premiums, called The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act. And I think members opposite should go back and have a look at some of the debates that happened at that time. And what did the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) say when he had a chance to talk about this? He said the member for Concordia was fear mongering.

Members opposite, they said there's no intention to bring in a health-care—we never talked about that, we never said that in the election, why is the member for Concordia raising this health-care premium? Well, we know the member for Concordia is a lot smarter than that entire government caucus put together because he knew what was coming.

And you can hear the howling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they didn't know. Those members all stood up with their speaking points just as the member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere) did a few minutes ago, and they read what they were told, which was that we are not going to consider a health-care premium, we would never do that. And that's why as we hear them yelling and screaming today, we know how surprised and shocked and upset they were when the Premier went out there and made his own announcement without talking to them. It's unbelievable.

Manitobans believe in public and affordable health care, and they expect their government to protect that above all else. And now we see how the Progressive Conservative crisis management team deals with these things. The Premier goes out and makes his proclamation without consulting with his own caucus. Without consulting with anybody, he goes out and makes his proclamation. And this is a Premier, of course, that never backs down from anything. He never apologizes for some of the ridiculous things he says. He never apologized for failing to report his Costa Rica corporations. He never apologized for misleading Manitobans about his holidays as he, as one of my colleagues said, follows his pattern of looks north and flies south. He never walked back his unfortunate comments about Manitoba's immigrant population; he never walked back his comments about young indigenous men.

But today was different. Oh, the Premier has walked back his comments indeed. And why did he do that? Well he did that just a few hours before he knew we'd be up debating this Opposition Day motion and members of his caucus would have to stand up and either support the NDP opposition in saying there should not be health-care premiums in Manitoba, or take the position that the Premier considered, which is maybe there should be health-care premiums.

And the Premier was worried. The Premier was worried he was going to lose that vote in this House, because I couldn't imagine the members of his caucus who've been hearing from people—we've certainly been hearing from people, we know they have in their own communities—and Manitobans are opposed to this new health-care premium, a new old thing which has been proposed by the Premier and turning back the clock in Manitoba not just 10 years or 20 years, but 43 years.

And, you know, we see how the crisis management works. Yesterday of course, in question period, I asked three times and the Minister of Health didn't know where the brand new \$4.5 million 'MRY' in Dauphin was. Gave him three chances to answer the question, he couldn't do it. We know the folks in Dauphin raised money, we know that there was a \$3.5-million expansion on the Dauphin general hospital to create an MRI suite. They had no answers.

So what they do? Well today they had the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) getting up on a backbench question and trying to talk about a \$150,000 spent on roads. Well, that's not going to play out very well in Dauphin. That's not going to play out very well in Swan River. That's not going to play out very well in Interlake because people there are angry and they are frustrated with a government which puts the bottom line and the almighty dollar ahead of patient care, of families, of seniors, of people who count on their health care being available close to home when they need it.

And we are very concerned where this government's going.

Perhaps this was all a false flag by the Premier (Mr. Pallister). Perhaps this is just his path to justify cuts even deeper and even graver than what we've seen so far. And maybe that's where the Premier is going to go. And then his backbenchers will be doubly upset as they hear from constituents, as they already are, about cuts to our system, about services now being cut, about emergency rooms being closed, about urgent-care centres being closed and people getting worse care farther away from home.

So I will listen carefully, I pledge, to what the other members have to say. *[interjection]* Well, I hear a south end—there's a south-end MLA chattering away. I wonder how she can explain the Victoria General Hospital emergency department closing. I'd love to hear her explanation. Maybe she'll get up, and I promise that I will listen to her.

I hope that by the time we call this for a vote that the members will stand on the side of Manitobans, they'll side on behalf of patients, they will support this motion, and perhaps we can even speak with one voice this afternoon against health-care premiums—

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

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to speak to the Opposition Day motion and to

speak on behalf of Manitobans. We've listened to Manitobans intently. We have gone out and broadly consulted. As we've heard from other members here, it's a consultation that I have not seen the like of in Manitoba for many, many years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we know the previous NDP government did not consult, and we saw that several times, the absence of consultation.

I listened to the MLA for Minto talk about his experiences in the former government caucus and in the rebel caucus, and I know that from those discussions the member has no knowledge of how the current government caucus works. And indeed, we are all well acquainted with policies and—government policies and plans, and we contribute to those.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a robust conversation that goes on, but I know the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) is not aware of that because he's aware only of what happened in the fragmented NDP caucus and in the rebel caucus that occurred, of course, there, that he separated from the government, as—with four other members, and they indeed dissolved into various—

An Honourable Member: Five. Five other members—get it straight.

Mr. Helwer: Well, that would be yourself, the MLA for Minto, and four others—

An Honourable Member: Five others.

Mr. Helwer: That adds up to five—oh, you had—

An Honourable Member: Five others.

Mr. Helwer: Oh, yes, the former member—now, what was that? That was the love train that sort of was on board but not quite. And what happened to the love train?

An Honourable Member: It derailed.

Mr. Helwer: The love train derailed, that's right.

And—but anyway, you know, I know that the member for Minto's not aware of a caucus that works together as ours does. I'm thrilled to be part of that caucus. And we were out broadly consulting with Manitobans about various things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of which was a proposed health-care tax, and they told us what they thought of what should happen to that.

But, you know, I kind of wonder—in fact, I do know what happened with the health and

post-secondary education tax that was brought in in 1982 and the consultations that did not happen on that tax. But, as a business owner, I've been paying that tax, as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for many years, and there was no consultation on that health tax. That is a health tax, presumably. That's what the name says: health and post-secondary education tax.

So the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) seemed to think that they repealed all health taxes, but I don't remember that one being taken away. In fact, it's augmented, it's expanded under the NDP.

And then, let me think what happened prior to 2011 election. There was some door-knocking that happened out there, and, you know, that the NDP went out and told people that there would be no tax increases. So then what would—did we see immediately after? There was fuel tax increases that said there was going to go to infrastructure, and that didn't happen. There were vehicle registration fee increases—again, no consultations, and proposal was that that would go to infrastructure somehow, and of course that didn't happen. And then they expanded and broadened the PST, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and promised that that would go to infrastructure but, of course, that didn't happen because infrastructure is debt-financed, something that the previous government didn't seem to quite understand.

And then, you know, they proposed to raise the PST without a referendum and repeal the referendum law. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know you know that many of us sat through the Legislature that summer—sat through the summer that—in Legislature, and we listened to Manitobans who did not want to see that PST increase that the previous government did not go out and consult at all on.

* (15:30)

In fact, I was at a couple of the budget consultations for the then-minister of Finance, Mr. Struthers—the MLA for Dauphin at the time, I believe. And, no, there wasn't any conversation about increasing the PST at those consultations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Not like our consultations where we went out and we asked people, what do you think about a possible health-care tax.

But, you know, the—I do remember the minister saying, well, somebody said at that time there was all this municipal amalgamation that was going on—again, with no consultation with the municipalities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just forced on them. And a couple of the municipalities were at one of those

meetings with the former Finance minister, and they said are there any taxes going up. And he said no, no, no. And they said what about fees—oh, there's a good idea. What about fee increases? Well, we could do that. He liked that idea. And then they brought in the PST increase. And we spent a summer battling for Manitobans in the Legislature. And, of course, the NDP government paid the price, I think, in the election. We see that.

They promised a lot of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Reducing wait times, doing away with hallway medicine. In fact, they changed the names of some hallways—they named them something else so they didn't have to count patients out on the gurneys in the hallway. And then there's highway medicine that we saw, and people being sent home from the hospitals to die on their doorsteps. Very sad.

So broad consultation that we saw with our caucus out throughout many of the communities in Manitoba. I know there are some others that are still yet to have their consultations. We had the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) out in Brandon last week to listen to people, and many other places around Manitoba—invited and public—were both at those consultations, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we went out and we listened to Manitobans. They told us what they wanted to see and what they didn't want to see. And one of the things they didn't want to see was a health-care tax, so—

An Honourable Member: We could have told you that.

Mr. Helwer: Obviously, the member for Minto doesn't listen to his constituents, because he didn't do that in 2011, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the constituents said no taxes and the member said, no, we're not going to raise taxes. But, again, they misled Manitobans. And we saw the results of that.

But, you know, we're dealing with this issue now. And we've gone out and we've listened to Manitobans. I've heard from many in Brandon and western Manitoba and all over Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have talked about a potential health-care tax, they've talked about user fees, they've talked about many things and given us some recommendations. And an astounding amount of recommendations, and—I think well over 37,000 people have responded. So far above anything we saw with the previous government.

You know, and I have to say that I'm in awe of my colleagues and how they have gone out and

listened to Manitobans in their communities. I'm sure the members on all sides know that that is part of our job—to listen to Manitobans. But you do put yourself out there and you don't know who's coming to the meetings and you don't know what they're going to say. But we're there to listen. We've had some very interesting discussions, minister–Deputy Speaker, from all over Manitoba about health care, about medicinal marijuana, about what we should do with the finances of Manitoba. They know we're in a very tough spot.

I know it's something that I see every week in Treasury Board. We get things that come to Treasury Board that are left to us from the previous—the NDP government that, no, they forgot to tell people about. There are agreements that they've made—long-term agreements that are hidden away from Manitobans. There was the history of the Tiger Dams, there was the history of untendered contracts that they did not disclose to Manitobans. And this was the history of the previous government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're now looking to change the way that Manitobans deal with their government. We want to hear from them.

We've been out talking to them. We've been out listening to them and engaging Manitobans across the board. And, you know, we invited even the opposition members to have consultations, and we—they said they—we have access, they could go on the website and find out what we're talking about. Here's the things we're hearing from Manitobans. Here's the things that they want to talk to us about. So there was open access, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Opportunities for Manitobans to engage not just with the government, but with all members of the Legislature, because, as you know, that is a good part of our job—listening to Manitobans, advocating on their behalf and making sure that their voice is heard in the Legislature here in Winnipeg, because we're not all from Winnipeg. We come from all parts of this promise—province, and we're very proud of the province of Manitoba and what Manitobans do. We know that they are engaged in this process, they are looking to develop Manitoba, they're looking to attract more jobs to Manitoba.

Businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you know, are encouraged by what's happening in Canada, less so does—encouraged by the federal government, although nice to see some changes from the federal Finance Minister as he tries to decide, you know, where he's living today, whether it be in France or in Italy or in Ottawa or wherever it's—you know, some

people seem to forget those things in the federal government, but here in Manitoba, we're listening to Manitobans, and that is the intent of this government. I know it's the intent of the members on the government side of the House, and we have listened long and hard. We will continue to do so. It's a consultation process that has not ended. We expect that we will have to and will engage Manitobans many times over on issues as we move forward to make sure that we can build the best Manitoba, the best and most improved.

Thank you.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I rise today to speak about the health-care premium that was floated as a balloon, and when it was shot down by people from all walks of life, fortunately or unfortunately, the Progressive Conservative government saw the light. It is amazing that a government with a large majority, a super majority, still pretends that it could lead by polling. The iniquity and unreliability of polling results are very, well, pronounced, especially when the polling is done with not so much as a survey with a specific demographics. What's happening is that in the website of, I think, WRHA, they ask questions, and those who log in, no matter how many times, can say whatever they want, and most of them are directed towards the health-care premium, which is health-care tax, and no matter how we cut it, it's still a tax.

But the trial balloon, I suspect, was flown for so many weeks in order to psychologically prepare those who are complaining about the health-care cuts to just accept it. If you are not willing to pay, then just keep your mouth shut, suffer the cuts. *[interjection]* Let me finish my sentence first before you say hem and haw. The beauty of this type of opposition from the people of Manitoba and from the NDP, which is the official opposition, is that we raised enough awareness that the Progressive Conservative government is making a mistake. It was a mistake, let's—there's no doubt about it. It was a mistake; I'll say that again. There's no doubt about it.

* (15:40)

And, if only it was proposed as if it was a tax, the howling from the people would have been louder earlier. It was labelled as a premium. When I was living in Ontario, they called it the Ontario Health Insurance Premium, and every paycheque—I was working for \$3.10, and every paycheque, there was \$2.50 that was taken off from about \$180 that I was making, and I was new in the country.

So I stayed in Ontario and worked at a warehouse for that amount of money and then decided to move to Manitoba. Manitoba used to have health-care premiums. I think it was back in 1971 when it was taken out by—which government was it? I think it was the NDP government.

And now that we are—this is '17-'71. Twenty-nine plus 17 is 46 years later, four and a half decades later, we are faced with a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who had the temerity and gall to reimpose a tax that will not only hurt the poor, but make health care a little bit less affordable.

It's as if health care was a product that we have to buy. It's not. Health care is not a product that we have to buy from the doctor.

Our universal coverage in the province of Manitoba and almost all of Canada is a socialist idea wherein people who have come together to form society have agreed to share each other's resources and share each other's food, share each other's gifts from our Creator, and keep on making the lives of people who rely on government a little bit easier.

The burden is heavy. It was heavy before; there's no doubt about it. We are a have-not province. We're trying to do our best to at least lift everybody up, and it was a choice between lifting everybody up or trying to, well, get ahead of everybody by stepping on the shoulders of everybody else.

And it is an attitude problem, especially for those who are not of the same colour as me to be so picky about how they will approach the most vulnerable in our society. They seem to not care, but I know that they do. But they care more about money.

From my point of view, when I was still struggling, when my job was at 7-Eleven, I was given a 15-cent increase, and I was really happy because that amounted to \$1.20 a day, and that was in 1996 and my thoughts are the same now. I was able to buy at least two chicken wings with my 15-cent increase, but right now those who are making minimum wage will have a little bit more problems, because 15 cents only buys one chicken wing if you worked for 8 hours.

And for those who have come from very poor backgrounds, like me, I struggled a lot, and I struggle and the health-care premium would have been a devastation for all of us, because some people will not be able to afford it and therefore be denied service. And it's a good thing that the Progressive

Conservative government saw the light and perhaps not only for one term but for the rest of our lives no health premiums.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the Opposition Day resolution.

I want to begin by talking about what has happened with this current government under health care, and to say, first of all, that the Premier is not being accountable. He blames everything and everybody, but without recognizing and without taking the accountability himself. He closed urgent care at Misericordia, closing emergency rooms; he blames the NDP and Dr. Peachey. While taking health services away from women and those healing from procedures, he blames the WRHA. The fact is that we know from various documents that these decisions are not being made by the WRHA; they are being made by the Cabinet. They are direct Cabinet decisions, from not only documents that the NDP have obtained but documents that Liberals have obtained which clearly show that they are keeping documents secret about the basis of these decisions because they are Cabinet documents and they are Cabinet decisions. So the Premier has nowhere to hide. They are his decisions and he needs to be accountable.

What we've seen in a year and a half is an attempt to cut costs by largely cutting front-line services, front-line services at Misericordia, in mature women's health, in various places, in physiotherapy, front-line services in emergency rooms, exactly the thing that he promised that he wouldn't cut to start with. And it's no wonder that people are upset and it's no wonder that when people have to go a lot more further to get to an emergency room that they're not happy, and we have to be concerned about the quality of care we are getting.

So, because he's struggling and doesn't seem to really know exactly where he's going, he wants to put on a new tax, and he floated the idea of putting on a new tax, but the question is here that when the Premier himself is making a lot of bad decisions, he shouldn't try to cover up those bad decisions by just asking for more money from taxpayers. That's not the solution. He needs to make better decisions.

* (15:50)

It's been a year and a half, and I raised recently the issue of preventing health problems, preventing brain and mental health problems, preventing

diabetes and a variety of others. And the response from the minister was, oh, he had to look after acute care and get acute care fixed before he could even start to think about preventing illness and keeping people well.

Mr. Speaker, that is the wrong way round. In fact, there is a lot of money to be saved by keeping people well, right, we know this. For example, in brain and mental health, we know that it's been clearly demonstrated that you can save substantial amount of money by employing in the right places, in hospitals, peer support workers, that you can keep people out of hospital and better by employing peer support workers.

And there is substantial evidence that putting psychologists under medicare for certain services, critical services, can improve the mental health care and can keep people better and, again, can decrease the use of critical-care services.

And yet, in a year and a half, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has not brought up any of these demonstrated ways of saving dollars, with their ability to save dollars not just long term, but shorter term. There's a lot of ability to save dollars by improving health, preventing diabetes, preventing heart attacks, preventing kidney problems and preventing osteoporosis—one could go down a very, very long list—and, again, with substantial savings.

And the Premier has talked about cutting bureaucracy, but, very strangely, instead of cutting bureaucracy, he's added an additional major load of bureaucracy with the shared services corporation, so that we're now going to have two different organizations, the WRHA and the shared services corporation running hospitals in the city of Winnipeg, one running the Health Sciences Centre hospital and the other running the other hospital. If you're going to save money, why would you add these layers of bureaucracy?

And so, once again, the plan that's been put forward and is being implemented by the Conservatives doesn't make sense. The goal needs to be to keep people healthier so that people—to decrease the need for services. The goal should be to make sure that we can provide care more efficiently with, for example, psychologists when there's very long wait lines for psychiatrists. The goal should be, as at the Mature Women's Centre, to be able to use allied health professionals like pharmacists to answer questions from people, to help improve their use of drugs and, in essence, to save dollars, as, in fact,

they've showed very clearly they can do with the mature health women's centre collaborative model.

So instead of approaching this with a sensible way of providing better services and reducing costs, what the government is doing is saving short-term costs to increase long-term costs, is saving short-term costs at the expense of long-term well-being and health. It's a backwards sort of plan that's being presented by this government. So it doesn't make any sense to support a health-care premium, which probably is really just designed to replace the reduction in PST that they may be about to implement.

But the fact is that this government hasn't demonstrated it needs to do this increase in health-care premium, and therefore there's no reason to support it. And we will be supporting the official opposition on this resolution. Certainly, with the importance of health care to Manitobans, Manitobans province-wide, that we've got a situation where there have been a lot of issues related to not only city of Winnipeg but rural health care, closing ambulance stations.

And the other point to make is that the government is appearing to govern based on Internet-based polls that the Premier himself admits have no credibility. Indeed, in a scrum, the Premier justified his decision to cut Manitobans' health care on the basis of an Internet poll that was widely distributed and shared on Facebook, but in the press conference the Premier admitted the poll could be filled out multiple times, wasn't limited to Manitobans, could be filled out from anywhere in the world, and no effort was made to sort responses so they'd accurately reflect Manitoba's population.

The claim that there's been 37,000 Manitobans consulted has zero credibility because it was a meaningless poll done in a way that doesn't get meaningful results.

And so we will support this resolution for all sorts of reasons. I don't believe that the government should be proceeding with a health-care premium.

Thank you.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): It's a great pleasure to stand up and speak to the Opposition Day motion urging the provincial government to not institute any health-care premium for Manitoba.

I just want to start by thanking a lot of the people that came out to our budget consultations, and I also

want to thank a lot of the farmers in our area and in this province for pulling in a great crop this year. I know they're—worked hard at it. They had a lot of help from Mother Nature this year. And I know—across our region from Roblin to Ste. Rose, I know the crop was a little touch on the dry side, but yet that was actually good for a little bit of the disease pressure that was going on, and, by and large, the crop went into the bin in good shape, and everybody got a good crop. And it's a welcome event for all of the Parkland and all of Manitoba when Manitoba farmers have a good crop, so I just want to congratulate them on a job well done.

And, yes, for—last week, I know we did a part of our budget consultations, and one of the first things I'd heard about in our consultations was the fact that the NDP had never done this in our region. And I was very lucky to have two consultations. I had one in Dauphin, and I also had one in Ste. Rose, and Ste. Rose is cattle capital of Manitoba, and it was really great to listen to both consultation processes. It was interesting to see the diverse opinions about issues that we had brought, and No. 1 was regarding the marijuana use. The other one was on the health-care sustainability. And it was interesting to hear the comments from both Dauphin and from Ste. Rose, so I know they did a—there was a great job done by all.

We know our prebudget consultations are an important conversation, and I witnessed that in both Ste. Rose and Dauphin. And I know last year we had done it in Roblin, and we got the perspective out of there. It was a very helpful exercise for me, and it was a great exercise for the people that showed up because they hadn't been listened to for a lot of years by the previous government. And it was—just gave us an opportunity that everybody was really, really appreciative that we took the time to consult them with on some major issues, which the previous government never did.

* (16:00)

Prebudget survey essentially showed—Manitobans that—and I certainly got the feeling in our region that our government is on the right path. And I know there's a legacy—there's a disappointment, a disappointment in our region over the NDP and what they've done to our region.

I hear that loud and clear, and I hear it in terms of funding. I heard it in terms of social outcomes. I heard it loud and clear in the budget consultations when they have—you know, they're hopeful that, you know, a change of government would change the

fortunes across the region, only to find out that the NDP put Manitobans—all Manitobans—at risk by uncontrolled spending and debt growth and this has really hampered the ability of our government to move forward on programming.

You cannot avoid that debt, even though the members opposite and the NDP think that it's, well, based on ideology. That money doesn't count. In a lot of cases I think, and I think I heard it from the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) is what's playing out right now is, no, Manitobans heard loud and—we heard loud and clear from Manitobans that, yes, the finances of this province do mean something. It can't be just a ideologically driven funding and spending—out of control spending.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard that loud and clear that across our constituency of Dauphin, they were really frustrated and disappointed by the NDP record and the mess that they left for our kids and rural Manitobans in general. And I know they're—feel that we are on the right path and in making a better Manitoba.

I know in the last we talked with the people in Roblin, and one of the issues—and they were also at our consultation in Dauphin. They were concerned about the PST hikes; the PST hikes that the NDP promised they wouldn't do and they did it anyway. And this has caused a lot of economic pressure on Roblin area and of course the west side of the province, so you know they were—expressed that concern one more time, and again they're frustrated by the suggestion even of the members opposite of death tax. And they just figure—like, when does it end for the NDP in ways to tax rural Manitoba and Manitobans in general?

So raising taxes was the least popular option by—get—and if the NDP had been listening to our constituency over the years, they would have heard that. It didn't seem to matter, they just raised the taxes anyway. And that's the way, you know, they treated rural Manitoba, and in fact Madam Speaker—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're frustrated over having to go and travel to Winnipeg all the time for health services. They're frustrated about that and what really frustrated them is the knowledge now that the NDP shelved reports. Reports from experts that would have helped health-care services across the province, especially in rural Manitoba.

Like, for them to know now that they shelved those reports—really in the end, they're asking did the NDP really care about rural Manitoba? And they just

don't believe that they did. They just did not care. Only at certain times did they care, just like MRIs that they promised for over 10 years. Over 10 years they promised those MRIs, and what did they do? They lifted the debt, put Manitobans at risk, put the economy of Manitoba at risk, and you have no choice but to put a—have a look at it, to evaluate because it's put Manitobans at risk.

And nobody, Mr. Deputy Speaker, feels it more than rural Manitoba. And nobody feels it more because they're the ones that contribute—along with everybody—contributes a lot to the Manitoba economy, but they're the ones that see and saw the lack of services and the lack of help and support by the NDP, the real support, and seeing the real support—or seeing the real NDP, when you look at the Auditor General's report and their oversight and management of MRI services across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those combined, the oversight and operations MRI services in the province, the huge debt that they left for rural Manitoba, and the continuous, unbroken promises. These are issues that now rural Manitoba and the Parkland are starting to realize about the NDP.

So I know the prebudget survey showed Manitoba's generally—we believe we are on the right path, and to stay on course. They agree that reduced wait times and new equipment are the priorities and the way to fund these spending increases is to find cost savings within the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, rural Manitobans are very, very hardworking people. They understand what we're doing as a government. They believe in what we're doing to make a better Manitoba for all our kids.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So I'm obviously pleased that we were able to put together—or put an Opposition Day motion today in respect of health premiums.

I do want to kind of just follow up on the member from Dauphin in respect of his, you know, erroneous analysis in respect of the NDP's commitment to rural Manitoba. Like, honestly, I think it's quite adorable that the member talks about how we didn't—we don't care about rural Manitoba when his own government, his own party just cut all the EMS, or a huge chunk of EMS.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And I think it is equally adorable that the member doesn't know where the MRI is. Like, where's the MRI? Like, you can't talk about the NDP in respect to supporting rural areas when you don't even know where the MRI that was designated for your constituency. Where is it? I don't understand.

So, well, now that that's woken up everybody, we are having a very important discussion, Madam Speaker, in respect of health premiums. And you know what, it is, you know, interesting that today the Premier (Mr. Pallister) decides to have, you know, a press conference in respect of health premiums and putting on the record that, well, some—I suppose I don't know—somewhat putting on the record that for this term, which will probably be his only term, and along with most of the members opposite there, that he will not have a health premium. I'm sorry—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm sorry that the members are upset about that—it's not my fault. I didn't put health premiums on the table. I didn't do that.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

When there is debate going on on the floor, I would ask that the member debating put her comments through the Chair, and I would ask that the comments that are currently flying across the Chamber cease to exist.

Thank you.

Ms. Fontaine: So, through the Chair, I just want to say I'm sorry that the members opposite are a little upset in respect of health premiums being thrown out there to Manitobans which, you know, really kind of threw everybody for a loop because as you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), you know, said during the campaign trail that there'd be no new taxes. And we've seen that kind of fall by the wayside. So, you know, again, I think it is, dare I say, suspicious that there was a press conference today in respect of this term and health-care premiums?

* (16:10)

So while, you know, I—there was another member that said—mentioned to me, well, your Opposition Day motion is kind of moot; you know, the Premier just made this announcement. But actually it's not, Madam Speaker, because—and again, I would suggest to everyone in the House, this will be a one-term government, this will be a one-term Premier. But you know, stranger things have

happened, and if it's not, then I think that we have to have it on the record where this Premier (Mr. Pallister) stands in respect of health-care premiums. And so I'm glad that we are all in this House about to take a vote in respect of this and we can get it as a part of the official record, so that—you know, sometimes I think people in this House have amnesia sometimes and they forget things that they said even though it's in Hansard, and we kind of deny that it's not there.

So I'm glad that we're going to be voting. I think it's timely. I think it's a respectful, democratic process that really honours Manitobans in respect of what they want to see. And certainly, we know that Manitobans do not want health-care premiums. And you know, let me just be very clear that, you know, health-care premiums will affect everybody, certainly. Everybody. But it will certainly affect the most economically marginalized and vulnerable of our province. And I can't understand—and it always boggles my mind that members opposite and their leader seem to have no concern about Manitoba's most marginalized and most vulnerable citizens. Like, I don't know if they forget—or, again—maybe, I don't know, have some semblance of amnesia, but those are also their constituents. They may not live in their particular constituency, but I have the belief, Madam Speaker, that we represent all Manitobans. We represent all Manitobans in the urban areas, in—we represent all Manitobans in the rural areas. We represent all Manitobans in First Nation communities.

We're so blessed—and I know I've said it so many times—we're so blessed to sit in this House. It's an absolute sacred responsibility. I mean, if you think about it, Madam Speaker, if you think about it just from the perspective of being a woman MLA—and I say this to all of my colleagues, you know, in the what, 127 years, and I'm sure one of the clerks can—*[interjection]*—147—thank you—years that we have had this House, that we've sat as elected officials, we're only 60 women of—under 900 men that have been elected.

Like, what a privilege, what an honour. And to sit by while the Premier, you know, cuts vital services for women's health, overall health, like the mature woman's centre which, I'm not sure if any of the members have had an opportunity—and I direct this, of course, to our amazing Speaker—I'm not sure if they've had the opportunity to actually go and tour the mature woman's health.

And actually the member for Fort—

An Honourable Member: Fort Richmond.

Ms. Fontaine: —Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) would agree that it was quite extraordinary; it's an extraordinary health facility, and I had the privilege of actually speaking with and having discussions with the women that work there. And actually two of the nurses—well, one pharmacist and one nurse, Madam Speaker, in case you don't know—they actually have the only training—very, very specialized training—to be able to do the work that they did, I suppose, at the Manitoba—or the woman's health clinic.

Two specialized nurses in all of Manitoba, and what does this Premier do? And what do the members stand by and allow to happen? The Premier decides to cut it. Instead of lifting up and honouring the expertise that we have in this country—or in this province in respect of women's health, we get rid of them. We just say, ah, thanks for your extra training, thanks for all your commitment, thanks for your dedication, thanks for your compassion that you've shown, but eh. Go find another job. You know, thanks for the infrastructure that you set up so that women can go at actually significantly far less cost than going to hospitals to deal with a variety of different issues that we deal with as women.

And the members opposite sit by while their Premier does that.

So, you know, to imagine that this Premier could even introduce the concept of health-care premiums in Manitoba when we know that we have a lot of vulnerable and marginalized folks that we all represent, we, all of us, represent, it is particularly egregious and particularly disrespectful and particularly reeks of a lack of compassion.

So, you know, I want to share just a little bit in respect of actually Noam Chomsky. I'm sure everybody in this room has read all of his books, right?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Ms. Fontaine: Read all of Noam Chomsky's books. He's brilliant, and so, if you haven't, I would suggest reading him. But he talks about—and I want to read a quote into the record: If you want to privatize something and destroy it, and I quote, says Noam Chomsky, a standard method is to first defund it so that it doesn't work anymore, and eventually people get upset and accept privatization.

So we are living in this kind of—this current context in which the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and all of his folks there go across Manitoba and feed poison to Manitobans under the guise that we are in just crisis and, you know, start cutting and slashing and burning and destroying, and it is like a really bad Skinner experiment in which you just end up accepting the horrible, horrible fate that you're dealt with.

Certainly, we can do better in this House, Madam Speaker. Miigwech.

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

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet, if necessary, on Monday, October 30th, at 6 p.m., to continue consideration of Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction Government Efficiency Act, 2017.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet, if necessary, on Monday, October 30th, at 6 p.m., to continue consideration of Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017.

* * *

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak. It was most interesting listening to the member who just spoke, the member from the NDP, and she spoke much about amnesia, and, Madam Speaker, if you were going to look for a definition of amnesia, if you wanted to see a group of individuals who would personify amnesia, that certainly would be the NDP caucus.

There was a thing called the 2011 election campaign, where the then-premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), was at a debate, and at that debate the member for St. Boniface was accused by the leader of the opposition of wanting to raise the PST. And he raised it, raised it in the debate and the then-premier said, no.

In fact, on his way out, and this is all—you could see all of this on YouTube—I would recommend you go and have a look at it—the media went to the then-premier and asked him: Are you considering raising the PST?

And he basically said: Read my lips—no new taxes. And the actual quote he said was: Nonsense. We will not raise the PST.

In fact, if you go back and you look at the 1999, 2003, 2007 and the 2011 election, the New Democratic Party stood by and supported the balanced budget legislation that had been brought in by the Filmon government.

*(16:20)

If you go back and you look at the original 1999 election campaign, members opposite, the NDP, you know—because they do have amnesia. If they wanted to, I could actually get them a copy of it. And I know the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) ran on this when he was a member back then, and one of the commitments was they would not change balanced budget legislation. And in that legislation, it stated very clearly—it stated very clearly that before a PST increase would take place, they would have a referendum.

Fast forward to 2011 election campaign, the premier of the day—the member for St. Boniface—said, no new taxes, no PST increase; nonsense, silly, read my lips: no new taxes. And yes, they would stand up and support balanced budget legislation. If there would be a tax increase, it would have to go to a referendum. They went door to door, knocked on every door, looked people in the whites of their eyes and said like our premier, the member for St. Boniface said: Never would we raise the PST. Nonsense idea.

It wasn't, Madam Speaker, but a few months later the NDP marched into this Chamber and the first thing they did in their first budget is they broadened the PST, basically making the PST cover almost everything that the GST. Basically, what the NDP brought in was an HST without the benefits. They brought in what was equivalent to a GST.

Well, Madam Speaker, that applied to all of those marginalized individuals that the member opposite so passionately wants to talk about, that she wants to advocate for. They taxed all the marginalized people and even made people who were not quite marginalized—even made their position precarious by the tax load that they brought in by broadening the PST.

If that wasn't bad enough, their second budget—and it was almost within a year, a little bit more than a year. I remember sitting in the opposite benches listening to then—Stan Struthers was the minister of

Finance, and he went on and he's giving his budget speech and all the sudden he says, and we are going to raise the PST. And I was one of those members—Madam Speaker, I was shocked. And I remember I, amongst others, we were going, whoa, where did that come from? And the only people more shocked in the Chamber than us in the opposition were the government members. Not once had the premier or the Minister of Finance or the Cabinet briefed the other members of their own caucus. They didn't know. They were as shocked and more shocked than we were on that side. The premier—the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger)—had given his word that there would be no taxes. He had done some consultation. He had consulted with Manitobans and he had said there would be no PST increase.

What was even more shameful was before Manitobans could even know what was going on, the ability to have a referendum on a PST was revoked. Legislation was introduced. Our political party went to court to ask if that was even constitutional. And it was found out that, under a British parliamentary system, legislation that is deemed introduced is deemed as passed. And, unfortunately, we didn't have a case at that time. And Manitobans were forced to pay the PST increase and do so without consultation, do so without having a say. They had to do so without a referendum.

Madam Speaker, fast forward to the last two, three months. We've put forward a consultation process, a robust consultation process not seen in the history of this province, not seen in the history across the country. In fact, you would probably be hard-pressed to find a consultation process as robust. More than 35,000 people have been consulted.

An Honourable Member: How many?

Mr. Schuler: More than 35,000 Manitobans have been consulted. Not a secret deal done by a premier, an NDP premier on a PST increase, not an NDP premier who went out and campaigned against something and then did exactly the opposite, and the only person he probably consulted with was himself. The member for St. Boniface, we're under the assumption, did consult himself.

So we went out and said we would do a proper consultation, and we would consult with Manitobans, more than 35,000 people—[interjection] And I'd point out to the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), a poll is considered accurate to more—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —consistency in a province like Manitoba. If they speak to 2,000 Manitobans in a poll, it is considered accurate, Madam Speaker. Two thousand—

Madam Speaker: Order.

I'm having incredibly difficult time hearing the member finish his debate, so I would ask members to please have the respect of the member that is on the floor, that has the floor and is in debate to at least hear that person out, so I would ask all members to please respect this request of mine. I appreciate it.

Mr. Schuler: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I was just trying to get to the point that if a poll of 2,000 Manitobans is considered a very accurate poll, can you imagine what a poll is accurate to for 35,000 Manitobans and counting? Thirty five thousand Manitobans already consulted. It's unheard of. It's epic and it is historical in proportion.

Madam Speaker, what is even more important, is not just did we take a poll of more than 35,000 Manitobans, not just did we go out and elicit individuals coming forward and giving us advice—and not all of it to our liking. We are getting all kinds of comments and suggestions. I had my budget consultation meeting yesterday and it was phenomenal. We got amazing advice. Some of the most young and dynamic business people out of the city of Winnipeg and surrounding areas, outstanding young Manitobans, and they give us some very interesting advice.

Madam Speaker, what is more important than holding a poll, what is more important than speaking to people, what's more important than going out and asking for opinions? The most important thing is listening to them, and today we have said to Manitobans, not just have we engaged you, not just have we decided to consult with you, not just are we asking you to participate, more importantly, we are listening. We are listening; we heard what Manitobans said and we have said that we will not be looking at a health-care premium. Thus, we will be supporting this resolution.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion in the name of the

honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew).

Do members wish to have the motion read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The motion for the Opposition Day motion is, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to not institute any health care premium in Manitoba.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Can you summon the members for a recorded vote?

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

Order, please.

The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Saran, Schuler, Selinger, Smith (Point Douglas), Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Swan, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 53, Nays 0.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Mr. Cullen: I wonder if you would canvass the House to see if there's a will to call it 5 o'clock.

Madam Speaker: Is there will to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

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