

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

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

Welcome back, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 213—The Allied Healthcare Professionals Recognition Week Act

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), that Bill 213, The Allied Healthcare Professionals Recognition Week Act; Loi sur la Semaine de reconnaissance des professionnels paramédicaux, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill will highlight and recognize the important work of Manitoba's allied health-care professionals. Distinct from those who practise nursing, medicine and pharmacy, Manitoba's allied health-care professionals practise in diverse areas of expertise, like physiotherapists, audiologists, lab technicians, dietitians and many other fields.

This bill would set aside the week of May 14th each year to demonstrate our gratitude for the important work they do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs First Report

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

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

- January 23, 2017 (2nd Session – 41st Legislature)
- January 19, 2018 (3rd Session – 41st Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016
- Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the January 23, 2017 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. FIELDING
- Ms. FONTAINE
- Mrs. GUILLEMARD (Chairperson)
- Mr. KINEW
- Mr. LAGASSÉ (Vice-Chairperson)
- Ms. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTIN
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Mr. SMITH
- Mr. WIEBE
- Mr. YAKIMOSKI

Committee membership for the January 19, 2018 meeting:

- Mr. ALLUM
- Hon. Mrs. COX
- Hon. Mr. FIELDING
- Mrs. GUILLEMARD (Chairperson)
- Mr. LAGASSÉ
- Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Mr. MICKLEFIELD
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Mr. NESBITT
- Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)

Your Committee elected Mr. NESBITT as the Vice-Chairperson at the January 19, 2018 meeting

Official Speaking on Record at the January 23, 2017 meeting:

- Darlene MacDonald, Children's Advocate

Official Speaking on Record at the January 19, 2018 meeting:

- Daphne Penrose, Children's Advocate

Report Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:

- Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016

Report Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following report but did not pass it:

- Annual Report of the Children's Advocate for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017

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

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts
First Report**

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Chairperson): I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

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

- November 4, 2015 (4th Session, 40th Legislature)
- November 30, 2016 (2nd Session, 41st Legislature)
- December 19, 2017 (3rd Session, 41st Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015 (Volumes 1, 2, and 3)
- Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016 (Volumes 1, 2, and 3)
- Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017 (Volumes 1, 2, and 3)
- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2017
 - Accounts and Financial Statements

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the November 4, 2015 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. DEWAR
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER (Chairperson)
- Mr. FRIESEN
- Mr. JHA
- Mrs. LATHLIN
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. MARCELINO
- Mr. PIWNIUK
- Mrs. STEFANSON
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)

Substitutions received prior to committee proceedings on November 4, 2015:

- Mr. PIWNIUK for Mr. SCHULER
- Mrs. STEFANSON for Mr. PEDERSEN

Committee Membership for the November 30, 2016 meeting:

- Mr. BINDLE
- Mr. HELWER (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Ms. KLASSEN
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. MARCELINO
- Mrs. MAYER
- Mr. MICHALESKI
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Mr. WIEBE (Chairperson)
- Mr. YAKIMOSKI

Committee Membership for the December 19, 2017 meeting:

- Mr. BINDLE
- Mr. HELWER (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Ms. KLASSEN
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. MARCELINO
- Mrs. MAYER
- Mr. MICHALESKI
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Mr. WIEBE (Chairperson)
- Mr. YAKIMOSKI

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the December 19, 2017 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. FLETCHER

Officials Speaking on Record at the November 4, 2015 meeting:

- Mr. Norm Ricard, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mr. DEWAR, Minister of Finance
- Mr. Jim Hrichishen, Deputy Minister of Finance

Officials Speaking on Record at the November 30, 2016 meeting:

- Mr. Norm Ricard, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mr. FRIESEN, Minister of Finance
- Mr. Jim Hrichishen, Deputy Minister of Finance

Officials Speaking on Record at the December 19, 2017 meeting:

- Mr. Norm Ricard, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mr. FRIESEN, Minister of Finance
- Mr. Jim Hrichishen, Deputy Minister of Finance

Agreements:

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Accounts and Financial Statements of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2017 at the December 19, 2017 meeting.

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your Committee has considered the following reports and has adopted the same as presented:

- Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015 (Volumes 1, 2, and 3)
- Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016 (Volumes 1, 2, and 3)

Reports Considered but not Passed:

Your Committee has considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2017 (Accounts and Financial Statements – concluded consideration of)
- Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017 (Volumes 1, 2, and 3)

Mr. Wiebe: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable Premier please proceed with his statement.

Recognizing Former Premier Greg Selinger

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, the Greek playwright Sophocles once said, this is man's highest end, to others' service, all his powers to bend.

It is rare for a sitting Premier to have the chance to acknowledge a former premier who is still sitting in this Chamber. I am pleased to have that opportunity today. I am pleased to have

the opportunity to acknowledge close to two decades of service of the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) to the people of Manitoba.

Public service, for all of us, means some of the best of times and some of the worst of times. It's a combination of many events, many challenges. This member's experienced many of those things, the highs and the lows of public service.

The member has served since 1999 for his riding, elected first in that year when the Doer government came to power. His talents were immediately recognized. He became Manitoba's Finance minister at that time and served for many years in that capacity.

Prior to entering the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, he had also served publicly as a Winnipeg city councillor. He had also worked as a professor in the faculty of social work at the University of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, it's obvious, as is the case for all of us in this Chamber, whether within parties or among political parties, that we have differing views on issues. We are people who think about issues, and so that happens.

But, Madam Speaker, our differences need not be focused upon today. I would nonetheless like to salute the achievements of the member, and I would like to note items for which the member deservedly should be proud.

Je note également le du-grand dévouement du député envers les gens de Saint-Boniface, et son appréciation et sa compréhension de notre francophonie manitobaine.

Translation

I also wish to mention the member's great dedication to the people of St. Boniface and his appreciation for and understanding of our Manitoban Francophonie.

English

I note that the previous NDP government also carried forward the Provincial Nominee Program established by the preceding government led by Premier Filmon. This has led, in our province, to an increase in our population, and I salute the member for his focus and his work in that file—on that file as well.

Of course, as you know, Madam Speaker, after serving as the minister of Finance the member was

selected as the leader of the New Democratic Party. He became Manitoba's 21st premier in the election of that—of two years thereafter, and he would continue to serve in that role until 2016.

I wish to reflect also, Madam Speaker, on the personal toll that public service can take. The member from St. Boniface has experienced many successes, but he has also endured many setbacks, and I think we must all here remember that he is a husband, he is a father and his family has also endured many of those highs and lows.

I also want to salute his wife Claudette, who needs to get prepared for more time with him, and their children, Eric and Pascal, as well, and say I know they will enjoy having that opportunity to get to know their husband and father a little bit better.

* (13:40)

Public service requires sacrifice, and my honourable colleague has never been afraid to demonstrate loyalty, even when that loyalty was not reciprocated.

Madam Speaker, I offer my sincere and heartfelt best wishes from one premier to another to the member for St. Boniface, and to say, je souhaite au député le meilleur des temps, avec une bonne santé et la paix dans ses prochains chapitres de la vie.

Translation

I wish the member the best of times, with good health and peace in the next chapters of his life.

English

In closing, I wish the member and his family the very best of times. I wish him good health and peace during this next exciting chapter of his life.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I would like to respond to the ministerial statement with a few personal observations about the member from St. Boniface, Manitoba's 21st premier.

I entered politics running under his banner and there's a few reasons that I chose to do so. One is a very personal reason. When my father passed away in 2012, the member for St. Boniface took the time to attend the memorial service and spoke at that time, and our family will always acknowledge that and remember that he was there with us in our time of grief.

I also think back to my days as a reporter for CBC television. In 2011, I was covering the flood that year and it seemed like everywhere I went, Souris, down the Assiniboine, Lake Manitoba, in the Interlake, everywhere that I covered flooding where people were in need, where people were in danger, the premier at that time, the current member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), was there. He was reassuring people. He was working with Prime Minister Harper at the time. But also with the common folks who were worried about their properties, who were worried about their lives, in some instances providing a steady hand. He was the leader our province needed.

Je reconnais aussi que M.—ou que le député de Saint-Boniface a appuyé le francophonie ici en Manitoba pour toute son carrière en politique. Il a toujours travaillé pour la défense des droits des langues minoritaire et puis les droits des francophones, et pour promouvoir la francophonie tout autour le Manitoba.

Il a assisté aux événements communautaires sans cesse et je sais que les résidents de Saint-Boniface sont reconnaissants du travail du député de Saint-Boniface.

Translation

I also recognize that the member for St. Boniface supported the Francophonie here in Manitoba throughout his career in politics. He always worked to defend minority language rights and the rights of Francophones, and to promote the Francophonie throughout Manitoba.

He attended community events all the time and I know that the residents of St. Boniface appreciate the work of the member for St. Boniface.

English

During his time as Finance Minister the member for St. Boniface tabled 10 consecutive balanced budgets, which is a remarkable achievement. He also helped to steer both as finance minister and then, as premier, our province through the aftermath of the global financial crisis. And the prosperity that many families enjoy to this day and the steady diversified economy is due in part to his contributions during that period of his public service.

Now, I also know, having had a chance to meet his family over the years, that his wife and children also sacrificed in order for him to be able to serve our city and our province. They gave up many hours

and much time with him, and I want to acknowledge them for lending us the member for St. Boniface so he could serve us over these many years that goes back to his time as city councillor and continues right on to today, his day here as MLA.

Alors je souhaite à Claudette, Eric et Pascal bonne chance et puis finalement pour le député de Saint-Boniface, je vous souhaite le meilleure expérience dans la vie aux prochaines jours, et puis vos prochaines étapes maintenant.

Translation

So I wish Claudette, Éric and Pascal the best of luck, and finally to the member for St. Boniface, I wish you the best experiences for the coming days and now for the next stages in your life.

English

So I wish you all the best, and I know I'm going to break a rule here, but miigwech, Greg.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the Premier's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: I rise to acknowledge the contributions of the MLA for St. Boniface and former premier who's represented his constituency in our Legislature since 1999. Even before he was in the Legislature, the member saint—for St. Boniface had made a name for himself serving as city councillor for the City of Winnipeg, on the board of the St. Boniface Hospital, on the board of the St Boniface museum, Community Income Tax Service board and as president of the Old St. Boniface Residents Association. And he'd worked as an associate professor at the faculty of social work at the University of Manitoba.

In the Legislature, while serving as Finance minister from 1999 to September 2009, the MLA for St. Boniface produced a series of balanced budgets for which he deserves credit.

As premier from 2009 to 2016, the member for St. Boniface had to deal with the economic downturn after 2008 and with the flood of 2011. The recovery from the flood continues today with evacuees beginning to return to communities like Lake St. Martin.

During his tenure as Finance minister and the premier, I had the opportunity on many occasions

to interact with the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) and to appear at functions with him. I remember in particular the occasion of a dinner organized by people from Laos. My daughter and her husband spent several years in Laos—10 years, in fact—and I visited there, so its people have a special place for me. The member was very supportive of the Laotian immigrants and their efforts, and this was very apparent from his reception at the event.

I also remember many events related to the Festival du Voyageur. For example, I was there in 2004 when the member for St. Boniface received a blue coat in recognition of his being a member of the Order of the Capote, a signal tribute to his contribution to the Festival.

And another day in Grand Rapids when we were both guests of Ovide 'Mercury' and the Mispawistik Cree Nation, the concern of the MLA for St. Boniface for people in this First Nations community was very apparent.

In the days since he stepped down as premier, the MLA for St. Boniface has at times been an important voice behind the scenes for fairness and respect within the Chamber, and I thank him for that.

We differed in many ways, but I respect the MLA for St. Boniface for his courage in putting his name forward to serve proudly in our Chamber for so many years.

On behalf of my wife and my family I also want to remember the contributions of the MLA for St. Boniface's family, in particular his wife Claudette and son Pascal and son Eric. Politics can be a challenge for family members, and it's important that their support be recognized.

In closing, I extend thanks to the member for St. Boniface for his service from my colleagues, the MLA for Burrows and the MLA for Kewatinook, and from our Manitoba Liberal Party leader, Dougald Lamont.

Félicitations au député de Saint-Boniface et à son famille—

Translation

Congratulations to the member for St. Boniface and his family—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow him to complete his statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Pour l'avenir, je veux le meilleur possible au député et à son famille.

Translation

I wish him and his family the very best for the future.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to pay tribute to the former premier.

Madam Speaker: Is the member asking for leave to speak?

Mr. Fletcher: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the member to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Fletcher: What has been said by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member from River Heights 'encapulates' much of the premier's record and accomplishments. If I may, I just would like to spend a moment perhaps from a different perspective.

* (13:50)

When I was involved in federal politics I had the pleasure of working with the member of St. Boniface when he was the premier of Manitoba, and although we came from different political parties we were able to work together on files for the greater good of Manitobans and for Canada. For example, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to be the minister responsible for Infrastructure in Manitoba for a number of years, and we were able to work together through Premier Selinger and through his ministers. I recall Ron Lemieux and Steve Ashton and Minister Chomiak come to mind immediately where we did what was right. There were everything from the Convention Centre expansion, improvements to highways, the Cartier water supply, initiatives around green projects and, perhaps, if you even go further back when he was Finance minister, the MTS Iceplex, the other transfers allowed Manitoba to prosper in a difficult time, including the economic downturn where I was a member of Treasury Board, and we worked very diligently with the premier.

So I think the premier, it's fair to say he's one of the more unusual seat mates I have had over the years, but we have been able to talk about philosophers like Edmund Burke and things that rise above politics as he rose above politics, at least in

my interaction with him, and Manitoba is better off for it.

May I say, at the end, I also appreciated—it's a little thing—but I also appreciated the premier's efforts to interconnect Manitoba transmission grid into Saskatchewan. This is something I think we need to look at more and I'd like to thank the premier for that initiative as well,

Madam Speaker, unlike all the other showoffs in this place, I'm not able to applaud or give the premier—former premier—a standing ovation, but I'm thinking about doing exactly that.

Thank you, Premier Greg Selinger, member for St. Boniface, for everything.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for St. Boniface, I know I have allowed a few rule breaks to occur over the last few minutes. I'm very aware of them, and because of the circumstances of the day, you're not getting anything past me; I'm just allowing this on this occasion to overlook them.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Before I start, I'd like to thank all the members for their kind words today. You always know when your career is coming to an end when everybody is being nice to you. It's just the way it goes.

J'apprécie l'occasion d'adresser l'Assemblée une dernière fois en tant que membre.

Translation

I appreciate the opportunity to address the Chamber one last time as a member.

English

It seems like yesterday that I entered the Chamber for the first time to experience heckling, yelling, making faces, showing embarrassing headlines and other shame-and-blame tactics. New rules have attempted to change that with members' statements heard first to set a positive tone, like we're doing now, and more predictable schedules to allow broader representation from the great diversity of people in Manitoba. Progress has been made, but I know we can make this place better for everyone, particularly those historically left out, to be heard, seen and respected.

À tous les citoyens de Saint-Boniface, ce fut un privilège et un honneur de vous avoir servis et représentés en tant que membre de l'Assemblée législative. Comme dans toutes les communautés

du Manitoba, la circonscription prospère grâce aux bénévoles qui donnent de leur temps pour améliorer notre qualité de vie à travers des clubs communautaires, des écoles, des garderies, des associations de résidents, des organismes sans but lucratif et des groupes d'entreprise locale.

Translation

To all the citizens of St. Boniface, it has been a privilege and an honour to have served and represented you as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. As in all of Manitoba's communities, the constituency thrives thanks to volunteers who give of their time to enhance our quality of life through community centres, schools, child care centres, residents' associations, not-for-profit organizations and local business groups.

English

To the Speaker, clerks and pages, your service for a well-run, dignified Legislature, I have appreciated, particularly during these long, lengthy sessions. To all the people who look after this building, you have ensured that it is a destination of choice for Manitobans and tourists. You make me proud of where we question, debate and legislate. To the security staff, thanks for making this a welcoming, yet safe place. To Members' Allowances and technology staff, I recognize your responsibility to keep us within the rules and connected. To the civil service, your work, based on fearless advice and loyal execution, allowed me and others to respond to the ever-changing needs of the citizens of Manitoba. The work continues. To the media, you hold us to account for all that is overlooked or poorly conceived and executed. It can sting, but it pushes us to be better. To the staffs of the caucuses, constituencies and Executive Council, thank you for your dedicated service to address the concerns of Manitobans.

Enfin, à ma famille et mes amis, merci pour tout.

Translation

Finally, to my family and to my friends, thank you for everything.

Madam Speaker: And just for the record, I would indicate that I allowed another rule to be broken. I did not ask the member to have to ask for leave to do his speech, so I need that to go on to Hansard that he was responding to the ministerial statement.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Kiwanis Club of Gimli

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour the Kiwanis Club of Gimli and District, which was established in 1974.

Today, it is the most respected club in Western Canada District, with over 84 members. The club has provided valuable services and support in Gimli and surrounding areas for the past 44 years.

Madam Speaker, they sponsor a Service Leadership Program. This program teaches leadership, volunteerism, and community service to youth in every school in and around the Gimli area.

The club has also supported community services for seniors and community services for adults living with disabilities.

To promote patriotism, the club has a flag program, which assists with putting up flags on businesses within the communities.

They also support community projects and programs such as natural playground projects in Gimli, school breakfasts, women organizations, local food banks and local sports organizations.

Madam Speaker, we're honoured today to be joined in the House by several club members: Terry Sekhon, past distinguished lieutenant governor in the Western Canada District; Sam Sekhon, past governor and currently international trustee for Canada and Caribbean; Mike Owen, club president; Phil Laing, district key club administrator; Nancy Laing and Norma Sharp.

Madam Speaker, I ask my fellow Legislative Assembly members to join me in congratulating the Kiwanis Club in Gimli district for the outstanding contribution they make to their community they serve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Carson Lee

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Today I would like to celebrate Flin Flon's own Carson Lee for his impressive achievements in the sport of wrestling.

Currently, Carson is a grade 11 student at Hapnot Collegiate and is an incredible young man who exhibits perseverance, courage and strength, both on and off the mat.

* (14:00)

After watching the success of his older brother, Hunter, who I honoured for his wrestling achievements two years ago, it has been a pleasure watching Carson come into his own. In 2017 he won a provincial gold, a national gold medal and a spot on Team Canada, a Canada Games silver medal, a Pan American silver medal in Argentina and the opportunity to participate in the 2017 World Championships in Athens, Greece.

On March 16th and 17th of this year, Carson is going to compete in the Junior Nationals in Montreal. Despite Juniors being a 21-and-under event, and Carson only being 16 years old, his incredible talent, athleticism and work ethic will make him a challenging opponent for any wrestler attending.

One of the challenges that Carson and his family face in his athletic pursuits are the distances he is forced to travel to compete, and travel is expensive. Carson's family has run several fundraisers with a lot of community support and now has his own GoFundMe page to help cover the costs of getting out of northern Manitoba.

I want to congratulate Carson on an amazing year. Flin Flonners are all incredibly proud of his achievements so far, and we want to wish him the very best as he competes for a spot representing Canada again at this year's Pan Am and world tournaments, as well as for his future as an athlete and a role model for all young people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Seniors Games in Seine River

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): From February 5th to 9th, the Seine River Retirement Residence hosted their ninth annual Seniors Games. Each year has a theme, and this year's was Laughter Is the Best Medicine.

The week kicked off with opening ceremonies, and I was invited to bring greetings on behalf of the Province. Once the games officially began, residents at All Seniors Care centres enjoyed a week of friendly, and sometimes feisty, competition within their building, and in competition with other 29 of the All Seniors Care centres across the country.

Residents had the opportunity to participate in transitional—or sorry—traditional activities such as billiards, bocce and card games, as well as digital events in Wii bowling and Wii golf.

The culmination of the week was the closing ceremonies, where athletes could relax, wind down and sit in anticipation of the medal ceremony. Within each building residents were awarded medals based on their performance during the games.

Seine River Retirement Residence had many successful winners during the week. Seine River also was represented on the national stage.

Two residents earned scores placing them in the top results of not only their building, but the country. Ms. Kathleen Michener was presented with a silver national medal for her performance in Wii bowling, and Mr. Roy Light received a bronze national medal for his performance in bocce ball.

I would like to take this time to congratulate both on their hard work winning medals in competition against their peers across Canada.

Thank you to all the volunteers, staff and everyone who helped make this year's games a success.

Rural Minor Hockey Provincial Championships

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, one of the sure signs of spring is the Hockey Manitoba rural minor provincial championships.

For four weekends until the middle of March, approximately 25 communities across this great province will play host to provincial championships in the age groups of atom, peewee, bantam and midget in boy—both female and male categories.

The provincials are the culmination of a year's work by a team of players and their coaches, with the team's participation determined by winning a regional playoff.

The provincial championships are a major undertaking by Hockey Manitoba, in conjunction with its major sponsor, Cargill, as they involve approximately 250 teams and over 4,000 players.

The host communities embrace the challenge of welcoming teams and parents from across Manitoba and showcasing their recreation facility and community amenities. Hundreds of volunteer hours are put in by the host committees in advance and on the weekend of the event to ensure the visitors receive a warm welcome and that the tournament runs smoothly.

Communities benefit financially from hosting a provincial championship, with thousands of dollars being spent on food, gas and lodging.

My home community of Shoal Lake hosted the peewee C male championship on March 2nd, 3rd and 4th, and I was pleased to witness some tremendous hockey and great sportsmanship.

On behalf of all of us here in the Legislature today, I want to thank all the volunteer host committees across the province for their dedication to the sport of minor hockey, and wish all the teams the best of luck.

Madam Speaker: Any further member statements?

Introduction of Guests

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

We have seated in the public gallery from Henry G. Izatt Middle School 55 grade 9 students under the direction of Eleanor Main, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Seven Oaks and Concordia Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Residents of north Winnipeg and the Interlake are worried. You know, the Premier has promised to close two emergency rooms which serve tens of thousands of residents who live in the north of our city and in surrounding communities. These are busy health-care centres that communities rely on.

Now, the Premier's wait-times task force report said Seven Oaks is the busiest community emergency department in Winnipeg with numbers rivalling those of St. Boniface Hospital. Now, Seven Oaks will only get busier. That same report said that when Concordia emergency department closes, one of the natural destinations for these patients is Seven Oaks.

Now, instead of listening to his own experts he's decided to close the two emergency rooms that serve folks all across the north of Winnipeg. Residents of Garden City, Tyndall Park, The Maples, West Kildonan and the city's North End all want to know

if they will be able to access health care when they need it.

Will the Premier stop his attack on our health-care system and keep the Seven Oaks ER open?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Welcome back to everyone, Madam Speaker, including yourself; it's nice to see you here.

As far as attacks on health care are concerned, the member speaks with some expertise, coming from the NDP where health-care services were diluted and eroding for Manitobans in many, many categories, including in emergency rooms. Having too many emergency rooms with not enough resources resulted in maximum wait times for Manitobans, hundreds of thousands of hours spent by Manitobans in pain, in fear. Waiting for health-care services is not service, Madam Speaker.

We're following the lead of experts and we're following the lead of other provinces where wait times have been reduced. Our wait times are already down and we plan to continue to keep it that way, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, the Premier's experts are actually now starting to say what we've been hearing from patients and families for over a year. They say that the Premier is cutting too much too fast, and he's out of touch with the people who have to live with the cuts that he's making and he seems to be indifferent to the consequences.

Now, the wait-times task force report was clear. If the Premier closes Concordia emergency room completely right now, this will put too much pressure on St. Boniface Hospital. Quote: St. Boniface Hospital will not have the capacity to accommodate these patients. End quote. And the Premier, to top it off, is not making the necessary investments so that St. Boniface Hospital can completely adapt to that new reality.

Now, instead of listening to patients and families, the Premier is paying high-priced consultants. He's listening to them instead of regular Manitobans.

Will the Premier stop his attack on our health-care system and keep the Concordia emergency room open?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the so-called, as the member referred to them, high-priced consultants, were hired by the previous government. They gave them advice on how to shorten wait times and they refused to follow the advice. That's a waste of an investment if I've ever seen one.

We are listening to the advice of experts. We consulted with Manitobans more broadly than the previous government ever did, and we are making sure that the investments we make in health care, which are more considerable than they ever were under the previous administration, bear fruit so that Manitobans don't have to sit in emergency rooms waiting in fear and pain for services that may never arrive.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, under this Premier's watch patients are waiting in hallways and some are even being treated in hallways in Manitoba. It's the return of hallway medicine under this Premier's watch. He's rushing his plan for cuts to our health-care system—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and it's all because he's listening to high-priced consultants, such as those that he commissioned at KPMG, instead of listening to patients and families.

Now, he doesn't seem to care about this chaos and confusion that he's causing, but it does concern many families in Manitoba and they're telling us that they've had enough. Now they are finding out that, you know, these cuts will affect them in the pocketbook too: the cuts to physiotherapy, the cuts to coverage of sleep apnea machines. Now, this is the agenda of a Premier who is focused not on the cuts, but strictly on listening to consultants.

*(14:10)

Will the Premier stop this plan to close emergency rooms in the city, reverse them and ensure that Seven Oaks and Concordia emergency departments remain open?

Mr. Pallister: Finally something the member has expertise in, Madam Speaker, chaos and confusion.

The fact of the matter is that we are reducing wait times that were the longest in Canada. We are already successfully achieving that goal, moving towards the goal of lowering ambulance fees by

50 per cent so that Manitobans who suffered financially under the previous administration don't so suffer now. We are doing this while maintaining and strengthening our commitment to health care by investing more than the NDP ever did in health care and by achieving improvements recommended to us by front-line workers and by experts, many of them hired by the previous government, but disregarded and disrespected by the previous government at the same time.

Where they got it wrong, Madam Speaker, we are getting it right.

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

Sleep Apnea Machines Provincial Coverage

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Now, when those front-line workers that the Premier just referred to reach out to us and tell us that they're frustrated with the fact that they're not being listened to, that their lives are being upended because of this rushed and botched plan to cut our health-care system, we're not surprised by that.

We were surprised when this Premier floated the idea of a health-care tax that would cost Manitoba families \$1,000 a year. Now, the Premier has decided to put that health-care tax plan off until the next election; however, he has announced a different form of a health-care tax for many families here in our province. This is a new health-care tax on over 16,000 Manitoba families; 16,000 Manitoba families will have to pay \$500 and more for life-saving medical supplies.

Sleep apnea machines are life-saving. Sleep apnea can be deadly. Now he is making Manitoba families pay hundreds of dollars for this life-saving treatment.

Will the Premier reverse his cut to sleep apnea machines for thousands of families here in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member speaks, Madam Speaker, about compassion for working Manitoba families, yet he's part of a government—was part of a governmental team that raised taxes to record levels on those same families while increasing Manitoba's provincial deficits and debt, doubling them, in fact, in six years.

Now, Madam Speaker, that delayed tax, that deferred tax, has to be paid by Manitobans later and by their children. There's nothing compassionate in that.

So we are endeavouring to fix the finances of this province, to enhance the stability that Manitobans deserve to feel about the financial situation here, while we are improving the services to improve the level of security Manitobans feel, and we are doing that, Madam Speaker, with what was handed to us by a mismanaged administration: the longest wait times in the country; the highest ambulance fees; and the greatest degree of dissatisfaction not only among customers of the health-care system, but among workers as well.

Madam Speaker, where they got it wrong, we will fix it, and we will continue to fix it because that's what Manitobans deserve.

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

Mr. Kinew: You could see the Premier's world view. He said customers of the health-care system. We believe that they're patients. They're families. They're people who deserve to be covered by universal health care in our province.

Now, the words that the Premier is sharing cannot hide his actions. It's a cut, plain and simple. It's a \$500 bill that will be sent to many vulnerable Manitobans.

Now, some of the people affected by this cut to the coverage of sleep apnea machines are here with us today. Now, Margaret has used a sleep apnea machine for quite some time. She will need a new machine in June, and the Premier cut off assistance as of this April. She knows how the health-care system will only incur more costs as a result of this. There's also Wayne here with us today. Now, the cost for his machine is actually more than \$500, plus the additional cost for filters, hoses and masks. They know that not only were their quality of life get worse, but that they will have to be paying more and more money out of pocket.

Will the Premier ensure that Manitobans like Wayne and Margaret do not have to pay out of pocket for life-saving medical care?

Madam Speaker: I would just like to indicate to members in the gallery that there is no participation allowed in the proceedings that happen on the floor,

and that would include applauding. So I would ask everybody's co-operation in that, please.

Mr. Pallister: People like Wayne and Margaret and other Manitobans, who were paying before with increased deficits and debt in our province, understand the reality of what we inherited here: a deficit that was moving upward every passing year, that would have been by next year, according to Treasury Board officials, at a level of \$1.6 billion. They understand the challenges we face in sustaining health care. We understand it on this side of the House. The member opposite does not.

If he understood the challenges we face he would have stood up and had his party oppose Ottawa's massive cuts to health-care transfers to our province, but he did nothing, Madam Speaker. He sat on his hands and he said nothing about it—\$2.2 billion less for health care in Manitoba, not a word from the member opposite. That inaction demonstrates the lack of understanding of the real challenges we face in this province.

We have the most generous programs in the country in terms of Pharmacare and in terms of programs to support—among the most generous in terms of supporting sleep apnea patients. But, Madam Speaker, we have to make the system last for tomorrow and for 10 years from now as well, and we can't ignore the realities the member conveniently ignores.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, it's bizarre to hear the Premier tell people what they know. You know, we spoke to them before they came into the gallery here today and they're very upset by this cut to the sleep apnea machines that they need.

There's Lisa [*phonetic*] here with us in the gallery today. Both she and her husband need CPAP machines in order to sleep. They're on fixed incomes. They simply can't afford \$500. What are they supposed to do? What are they supposed to do now, Madam Speaker? Sixteen thousand Manitoba families will be put into a similar predicament as are Lisa and her husband.

Now, did the experts recommend this? No. Dr. Najib Ayas from the Canadian Sleep Society called this, quote, a big step backwards. Did the Peachey report recommend this? No. It is simply the Premier's cost cutters and consultants that said forget about the evidence, forget about the consequences.

Will the Premier reconsider his decision today, tell Lisa, Wayne and Margaret that in fact their sleep apnea machines will be covered completely?

Mr. Pallister: This government will continue to invest the highest percentage of any province in health care, Madam Speaker. This government will continue to dedicate itself to making sure our health-care system works for the people of this province. We have among the most generous systems now and we can plan to continue to keep it that way.

Madam Speaker, the member speaks about not listening. Those same people who live on fixed incomes had their taxes broadened by the previous government—massively—by more than the citizens of any other province, in fact. They had the PST raised and nobody listened on the other side when they were in government. In fact, they took away the right of these same people that they're using in these question preambles today; they took their right to actually vote on this issue.

I care about the sustainability of this system and so does this government. We understand that we need all hands on deck, and that includes the members opposite, Madam Speaker.

Sleep Apnea Machines Provincial Coverage

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, it seems that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) believes that covering necessary medical care for 16,000 Manitobans was wasteful, and I'm going to give the Minister of Health today the chance to distance himself from this Premier.

CPAP machines allow Manitobans living—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Swan: CPAP machines allow Manitobans living with sleep apnea to work, to study, to provide care to others. It can even mean the difference, Madam Speaker, between life and death, and this government's decision to slash coverage will cover—or will cost each Manitoban living with sleep apnea \$300 or more each year in supplies and a further \$500 each time they need to replace their machine.

Does the Health Minister also think that providing this coverage is wasteful?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, the

member for Minto knows a thing or two about distancing himself from leaders.

But I know that, as our Premier has said, the health-care system needs to be sustainable. It needs to be here for those who need it today, but it needs to be here for those who need it tomorrow as well. There are many others who will be diagnosed with sleep apnea in the years ahead and we need a system that is sustainable.

* (14:20)

We need a system that is generous, yes, but is generous not just today but in the future as well. I stand four squares with my Premier on sustainability.

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

Mr. Swan: There are 16,000 Manitobans who need this care today and this Premier's Health Minister are trying to take it away from them.

Last month I was visited by Bernie. He lives in Betelstadur co-op down Sargent Avenue, got his electric wheelchair and visited me in my office to let me know the impact this was going to have on him. His pension income is about \$1,200 a month. His rent is about \$650 a month. He's worried about how he's going to put food on the table and make ends meet when he has to pay for supplies or, even worse, when he has to replace his CPAP machine. Reversing this cut would mean the world to Bernie.

Will this minister stand up for Bernie and 16 other thousand—16,000 other Manitobans and reverse this cut?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I'm sorry that the member for Minto didn't stand up for Bernie when he was in government in increasing taxes on him and every other Manitoban, making it less affordable for him and all Manitobans.

But when it comes to the issue of sleep apnea, we know that our program now will be sustainable. It will be one of the most generous in Canada, Madam Speaker, certainly more generous than British Columbia under an NDP government, certainly more generous than Alberta under an NDP government.

I know that the member opposite hasn't said anything to his counterparts in those provinces. We're proud to have not only a sustainable program but one that is one of the most generous in our country, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, this minister's answer shows that he does stand with the Premier in aiming lower in Manitoba.

While the rest of Canada is moving towards better coverage for treatment, this minister is determined to move Manitoba in the wrong direction. Madam Speaker, 16,000 Manitobans, including those visiting us today, have just been handed a bill from this Health Minister for their treatment, and yet this Premier and this minister will try and tell them that Manitoba's an outlier when, in fact, experts at the Canadian Sleep Society have been campaigning for the provinces to increase funding to meet Manitoba's standards and I hope we'll see changes in other provinces to meet Manitoba.

Will the health care—the Health Minister listen to the voices of 16,000 Manitobans and their families and reverse this wrong direction?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, we listen to the voices of Manitobans today, but we also listen for those who can't speak yet, those who will need the health-care system in the future, those who will need to ensure that we have a sustainable health-care system. It's one of the reasons that we've so strongly advocated for Ottawa to be a real partner within the health-care system. But we also know that those programs, which are generous in Manitoba, like the sleep apnea program, continues to be, has to be there for future generations of Manitoba. We have a responsibility for Manitobans today, but we also have, as legislators, a responsibility for Manitobans tomorrow as well, Madam Speaker.

Education System Budget School Division Funding

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): For the last number of years thousands of additional students are now going to school here in the province, yet for the first time in a generation education funding is not keeping up with that growing enrolment, let alone keeping up with inflation.

The minister's education budget means less supports and growing class sizes. It's a de facto cut, Madam Speaker, for our schools and an absolute reduction in funding for dozens of school divisions across the province.

I have not met one parent, Madam Speaker, who has said to me they want their child to have less

one-on-one time with their teacher. So why won't the minister meet the needs of a growing province and invest in the supports that our students deserve and need?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question, but I would like to take a moment to recognize the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger). I know earlier many glowing remarks had been said about his contribution. I certainly had many personal contacts with him, not only since being elected but before, and I always found him to be very respectful and very open and I certainly appreciate the attitude and the example that he has set in this Legislature over the years, so I would like to take a moment to do that.

In regards to funding of schools, we are funding schools this year at a record \$50 million more than the previous government ever did, for a record of \$1.323 billion.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the reality is, Madam Speaker, that the minister's approach to education is leaving some children behind. School divisions are proposing cuts to educational assistance, to vocational programs and to accessibility. The students who most need the help are taking the brunt of this minister's decisions.

Red River Valley School Division is facing a nearly \$1-million shortfall this year and has been forced to eliminate funding for their accessibility plan and basic school supplies. Board chair Shelley Syrota says, quote, it's unfortunate that some of our most vulnerable kids and families are going to pay the highest price for some of these cuts. End quote.

So I ask the minister: Why is he making cuts that hurt the most vulnerable students the most?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the member's question.

We've certainly done our best to help school divisions with some direction on how they might manage their expenses, especially when it comes to executive or administrative expenses, which have grown very much out of line with other contributions over the past few years, and some guidelines in terms of managing costs.

I know that the member opposite probably struggles with the concept of managing costs as a way to keep things in line, but we do know that

school boards have demonstrated the ability to do that, and we encourage them to demonstrate that, particularly this year, to—not only to the students and Manitobans, but to their ratepayers.

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

Mr. Wiebe: I think it's pretty clear the minister isn't listening to me. That's okay. But what's clear is that he's not listening to the parents, the teachers and the local trustees who are sending him a very clear message.

Allan Downey, trustee with the Southwest Horizon School Division, wrote an open letter after the initial—open letter saying that after initial conversations he got zero follow-up from the minister and no follow-up from the MLAs for Spruce Woods and for Arthur-Virden to his concerns. And he says, quote, the budget that the Education Minister has provided takes us down the wrong path. End Quote.

Trustees understand how these cuts will hurt, teachers understand how these cuts will hamper their ability to give a good education and parents certainly understand the impact that it'll have on their children.

Does the minister understand the impact that these cuts will have on Manitoba kids?

Mr. Wishart: What this minister understands is that Manitoba students are funded at the second highest level of any province in Canada. And this minister also understands that we need to focus on the front line. And it's many cases we've had administrative costs getting out of hand and school divisions have to demonstrate not only to their members but to the students that they're prepared to work to manage those administrative costs so that they can focus too on getting the best education to the front line. I think that's something we should all work towards here in Manitoba.

Justice System Fairness for Aboriginal Canadians

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): After two recent trials rendering not guilty verdicts of two non-indigenous men accused of murdering indigenous youth, Canadians are becoming more aware of the judicial circumstances faced by indigenous peoples within our Canadian justice system.

A recent report has ranked Manitobans' criminal justice system as the worst in the country. The report

confirms what justice officials and advocates and those who have been through the system have been saying for years. Certainly, Madam Speaker, we need to do more and we need to do better.

Will the Justice Minister acknowledge that Manitoba has fallen behind under her watch, and that real action must be taken to improve the fairness and accessibility of our justice system for all Manitobans?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I just want to take this opportunity, as well, to say that our hearts go out to the family of Tina Fontaine as they grieve the loss of their loved one. Tina's death is a tragedy for all Manitobans, and our thoughts and prayers are with her family and with the Sagkeeng community at this time.

With respect to the criminal justice system in Manitoba, after 17 years of NDP mismanagement, that's where we're at. We've got a lot of work to do. We've made some inroads in some areas, Madam Speaker, but we've got a ways to go, and that's a result of many, many years of mismanagement by the previous NDP government, under her watch.

* (14:30)

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

Pre-emptory Challenges

Ms. Fontaine: The case of Colten Boushie highlighted a grave issue in the justice system, the discriminatory use of pre-emptory challenges. The Prime Minister and the Justice Minister have both acknowledged this issue, and now it's up to the provinces to hold the federal government's feet to the fire.

This has been on the country's radar since Manitoba senator Murray Sinclair's Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in 1991, and last week Alberta's justice minister did her part and sent a letter calling on Canada to make those changes.

We know that this Justice Minister sent a letter regarding preliminary inquiries, so why hasn't she found the time to advocate for an end to pre-emptory challenges?

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for the question. The member rightly stated that pre-emptory challenges falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

When it comes to the pool of who we reach out to to be members of juries, we took a proactive approach and changed the system that was under the previous NDP government back in November of 2016, and we changed that to ensure that members within the community could be jurors and they would be selected from those communities. So that's a decision that we made. That's a change that we made which is a step in the right direction.

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

Improvements Needed

Ms. Fontaine: I didn't hear the minister say if she's going to send a letter to the federal government in respect of pre-emptory challenges.

A rise in violent crimes and a spiraling addictions crisis is putting pressure on already stretched justice system. We must pressure the federal government to make real changes here and pressure the Minister of Justice here in Manitoba to make our courts fairer, more efficient and more equitable. Manitoba is already dead last among the provinces; we cannot afford to get any worse.

Will the Justice Minister do her part to strengthen our system?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the member opposite needs to understand that it's not just about sending letters to the federal government. It's about taking action, and, in fact, our government has taken action and took action as soon as November of 2016 when it comes to the jury selection process. So we have taken steps there. We've also gone beyond that as well, Madam Speaker, and included adopting plain language for jury declaration forms as well, which has helped to reach out to members of the community.

So I think the member opposite should look in the mirror. It was her previous NDP government that took no action that left us where we are today.

We are taking action. It's not about letters; it's about action.

Child and Family Services Permanent Wards and Customary Care

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): My people were hopeful in this new government when dealing with the CFS crisis. We want to trust in this government.

We are deathly afraid of losing our children forever. We know many children have died in care.

Families and communities live with a huge hole due to the failure of the systems that are beyond our own people's control. Families belong together. One way to achieve this is to allow 'cermanent'—permanent wards to be transferred to customary care arrangements to ensure they stay within their families and communities.

Can this government make that happen?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): This government is committed to reforming the child-welfare system in the province of Manitoba. Just in the last number of days there was a summit with MKO. I know the member was—attended the summit as well. I know the member—one of the members who are leading our legislative reform committee has heard from close to 1,500 individuals in terms of changes to the child-welfare system.

We have committed to customary care, a part of our reform plan. That's exactly what we will do, Madam Speaker.

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

Indigenous Input in Policy Development

Ms. Klassen: I was very grateful to hear that the blame game wasn't reiterated, because if you want to blame somebody, you know, blame me, because I should have been at the premier's door when he was there. I should have been at Stephen Harper's door when he was in power. I should have been standing up for our most vulnerable.

The CFS system of which one of our—one of the ministers referred to as a national embarrassment only two years ago, has had little change. We all have a role to play to ensure this never happens again. We've had had far too many years of being ignored when decisions about our children are being made around the tables in this building.

What actual participation will indigenous leaders have in the redrafting of CFS policies and legislation?

Mr. Fielding: And including making sure indigenous leaders are a part of this process is the most important thing that we can do. We have members of part of our Legislative Review Committee, from SCO, members from MKO, as well as the Manitoba Metis Federation. They will 'bre' bringing forward some recommendations to myself to change our legislative process and change—making some reforms to the CFS system.

We've had numerous summits in terms of SCO. We've had 'numerit' summits in terms the MKO. And the Manitoba Metis Federation, we're having some summits where we're hearing the voices of indigenous people this week.

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

Biological Parental Rights

Ms. Klassen: For everyone here, life goes on. But for me and my people, we mourn. We see the missing students in our school. We see the parents' woeful smiles. My people are grieving. Generations of lost children—it seems to never end.

We need to know what this government will do to ensure the cycle ends, truly listening to the people of who your lives dictate—of your policies dictate to.

The minister heard foster parents have more rights over our children.

Will the Province ensure that biological parents have equal consideration, or better yet, priority consideration, over foster parents?

Mr. Fielding: Well, this government is taking action. We've addressed this. We've said that one of the most important things our government can do is reform the child-welfare system, and that's exactly what we are doing. We are listening to indigenous individuals. We're listening to people all over the CFS system to make some changes.

There's a legislative review process that's ongoing right now that's visiting places like Brandon, visiting places like The Pas and Thompson and other regions to hear their voices.

We—what will happen is that Legislative Review Committee, which is made up of indigenous individuals, will report back to us and we'll be introducing legislation to fix a broken system here in the province of Manitoba.

J.R. Simplot Company Manitoba Expansion Plans

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, while Progressive Conservative caucus members have been working hard in their constituencies since rising in December, I've also heard that some very interesting developments have taken place in Portage la Prairie.

I'm wondering if the Minister of Agriculture can inform the Assembly of this important development.

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): I thank the member from Riding Mountain for that question.

Just less than a year ago we announced Roquette built a new facility in Portage la Prairie.

And yes, Madam Speaker, Manitoba is open for business. This government is very pleased that Simplot picked Portage la Prairie for a \$460-million investment into the 'patol' industry.

This is yet again an example of our efforts to rebuild Manitoba's economy in order to strengthen Manitoba's future on a path on becoming Canada's most improved province in all of Canada.

Northern Manitoba Communities Mining Investment Ranking

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): In one year, Manitoba has fallen from second place in the world to invest in mining to 18th. According to the latest Fraser Institute report, northern Manitoba is suffering more massive job losses, up to 1,500—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —from mining closures in Thompson, Flin Flon, information that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) coldly dismissed as old news—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: Will the Premier acknowledge that this new news is proof he's only making things harder for people in northern Manitoba?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Well, Madam Speaker, I'm really pleased for the member to ask me that question because I just got back last night from the world's largest mining convention in Toronto, Ontario, where we met with over a dozen companies—mining companies, exploration companies—that said Manitoba is the No. 1 place to do their business.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (14:40)

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. The Speaker's standing.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, I realize the members of the government think this is quite funny, but investment—Manitoba's no longer the

top-ranked jurisdiction for mining investment due to the uncertainty created by this government's policies, and that's a quote. It is the policies of this government which is making life harder for northerners. This government has cut investments in northern roads. They're making health care less accessible in northern Manitoba, making it harder for mining companies to attract workers and their families.

When will the Premier actually start making life better for northern Manitobans instead of worse?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, again it's just unfortunate that the member wasn't in Toronto at the convention because there is a lot of excitement about working and doing business in Manitoba. Not only are the companies interested in doing—and are doing business in Manitoba, these companies are reaching out to their local—the indigenous communities that they're working nearby, they're striking relationships with these companies, they're employing these people that are coming to work on their job sites. They see great potential ahead for further training to get those people working on their job and in their mine sites when these become developed.

There is great opportunity happening in Manitoba. It's unfortunate the NDP is so disrespectful to these companies.

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

Duty-to-Consult Framework

Mr. Lindsey: An interesting lead-in to my third question. The former minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade promised to have a duty-to-consult framework by last May. He didn't do it. The current minister has taken almost a full year extension on the same promise.

Meanwhile, Alto Ventures recently cancelled an exploration program at Oxford Lake because they didn't know the government's position on consultation with First Nations.

When will this government admit that their policies, which are making life harder for northern Manitobans, aren't working to invest mining companies in Manitoba?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, it's unfortunate that the member for Flin Flon speaks so disrespectful of Chief Ron Evans and the work that he's doing on a mineral development protocol. It's—they are working

very—that committee is working very hard. They've met with a large number of the communities across the North and we're getting that protocol together in co-operation with both industry and the local communities. People of the North are excited about this prospect of even more mining activity across the North, which will create good-paying jobs for everyone in the North.

Non-Profit Organizations Funding Commitment Inquiry

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The Pallister government was elected on a promise to allow communities to have a say on how provincial dollars were spent on local priorities.

The Manitoba Community Services Council did just that and they have a volunteer board with—around the province with a small staff that help non-profit organizations, but after 33 years of service that organization has been cut. We've lost an organization that saw the value of investments in things like daycares and community centres.

If the minister was committed to our local non-profit organizations they would put a plan and make a commitment to local non-profits months ago.

When will this cut be explained to the public?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): And I'd like to thank the member for the question.

You know, Madam Speaker, we, unlike the members opposite, we do care about community organizations. As a matter of fact, we have been consulting from day one, since we took office. As a matter of fact, recently I'd met with a number of organizations throughout Winnipeg and Manitoba in community funding organizations and I can tell you that the communications are going very well. They understand that we need to focus on the recipients and not administration.

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

Mrs. Smith: I, too, have been meeting with many organizations, so I don't know who this minister has been speaking to. But many of these organizations are afraid of their funding being cut—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: We—a recent freedom of information response reveals that the Neighbourhoods Alive! program has spent less than 60 per cent of its budget.

Just like the funding through the Manitoba Community Services Council, our non-profits are left with more questions than answers. There seems to be a stunning lack of transparency and unwillingness of this government for straight answers to the future of these programs.

So I ask this minister: Will he commit to keeping the funding for these programs at the same level, if not more, and when will the money actually be spent?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, as they say, Madam Speaker, it's the actions that speak louder than the words.

The previous administration demonstrated its respect for local organizations and local governments by eliminating a third of those local governments the night before the annual meeting of those very organizations. Cutting a third of them with zero meetings, zero pre-consultations, zero transparency, Madam Speaker, is how the previous government showed its respect for local organizations.

Where they failed to build those relationships, Madam Speaker, we will succeed.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Access to Health Care

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba health facilities.

This petition was signed by Debbie Blackshaw, Les Lulianchu [*phonetic*], Jadelyn Macey 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. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

* (14:50)

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care

system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

The petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitobans' public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resources plan, increase publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increase the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in test-in Manitoba's health facility.

Signed by Rachel Esquash and many other 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 recently announced it would cancel the airfare subsidy for some 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 those—these services in accordance with the needs of northern Manitobans.

Access to Health Care

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I wish to present

the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's health—public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facility.

And this was signed by David Rivet, David Puttaert and B. Puttaert and many more Manitobans.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the MLA for Elmwood, that under rule 38(1), the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the urgent issue of railway backlogs across western Canada, which is delaying delivery of Manitoba grain and imposing serious financial constraints on Manitoba producers, and the urgent need for the Manitoba government to stand up for Manitoba farmers and producers and pressure the federal government to immediately act to ensure grain can be shipped to market.

* (15:00)

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for Flin Flon, I should remind all members that under rule 38(2) the mover of a motion of a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other recognized parties in the House are allowed not more than 10 minutes to

explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beauchesne's, citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, I rise on this because it is a matter of urgent public importance. Farmers are in dire straits. They can't ship their grain, which means that if they can't ship they don't get paid. This is impacting their abilities to plant crops this spring.

This government—this provincial government—the minister said—the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) said he sent a letter. Well, we just heard from another member of the government that not just about sending letter—it's not about letters, it's about action and really that's what this motion is about. That's why we need to debate it today is because it needs to be about action, action so that our farmers in Manitoba can ship grain.

This Premier (Mr. Pallister) has remained silent on the plight of farmers. Not once has he publicly said anything that I'm aware of about the situation. He's taken on the federal government and many other instances when it came to health care, when it came to carbon tax, when it came to cannabis. I guess he was not wanting to take this one on because he doesn't have a very good track record when it comes to those, which is very unfortunate.

I do really want to stress that the Minister of Agriculture for this province should be screaming from the rooftops. He should be demanding action. He should be up every day, every minute, demanding that this federal government that's doing nothing actually does something to get the grain moving. Even—we—[interjection] We'll get there.

We know that the federal government has a bill, Bill C-49, that's tied up in Senate. Now this omnibus bill has all kinds of parts in it that have absolutely nothing to do with moving grain in the province of Manitoba, so we are today urging everyone in this House to stand with us and demand that the federal government splits the parts out that affect rail transportation and we urge our members of the Liberal Party here in Manitoba to actually stand with

Manitobans and talk to their counterparts in Ottawa and get the grain moving. This matter is vitally important for all farmers.

Earlier, we heard the Minister of Agriculture talk about, you know, the investments in different—*[interjection]* Oh, it's so good to be back. We've heard him talk about investments in processing plants. Well, if they can't ship their product, Madam Speaker, what's the point? What's the point of the government doing one thing but not doing everything so that the agriculture industry can get their product to market?

Madam Speaker, this government sat idly by and continues to sit idly by and do absolutely nothing—absolutely nothing—to get the Port of Churchill open. We have a port in this province that could be shipping grain, if only it was open, if only the rail line was running, if only this government took some action to get the rail line and the port up and running. But, no, we've seen no action there.

Keystone Agricultural Producers supports having that port available so that Manitoba farmers can ship their grain through the shortest rail line possible and that is to the Port of Churchill. And I urge not just this Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), but this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government to recognize the importance of a port in this province being able to ship product for the farmers of this province.

They're ignoring them. They're ignoring their very base of support here. The agricultural sector is a vital part of this province. They're ignoring them, can't ship grain. Apparently, they don't seem all that excited by that—this government, I mean—they don't seem all that concerned.

The minister says he sent a letter. Clearly, just sending a letter has inspired no action. So clearly, the Minister of Agriculture and this government need to do more. And that's why we bring this matter to the House today. This is the first opportunity we've had to bring this matter up, and that's why we brought it up in the manner that we have in a matter of urgent public importance, because it is. It's important to our agriculture sector. It's also important to the rest of Manitobans, Madam Speaker, because what affects agriculture does affect all the rest of us down the line.

We urge this government to stand with us. We urge the members of the independent parties, we urge the members of the Liberal Party to stand with

us, to stand with Manitoba farmers and do more than just send a letter, but actually engage the federal government, demand that they split that part out, demand that the Senate pass that and get that Bill C-49 moving.

But we also want this government and all members of this Legislative Assembly to stand with us and get the Port of Churchill open, because we could be shipping grain through that port. We could increase the amount of grain that was shipped through that port. Instead, nothing, no grain being shipped in a port out of this province while Manitoba farmers suffer.

Manitoba mining companies also suffer because, as the owner of that railway has neglected the line to Churchill, it's affected all the rail lines in northern Manitoba. The mining companies that used to ship product are now finding they're having to send it by truck.

I can speak to what that's doing to our infrastructure. Our highways are getting beat up with the increased truck traffic in the absence of functioning rail lines. I hope this government doesn't think that it's reasonable, that instead of shipping grain by rail to Vancouver or wherever, that they start shipping it by truck. The rest of our roads cannot take it. It's unacceptable that this government has sat on their hands on this issue until finally the agriculture sector raises it and the minister says, I sent a letter, what do you want of me, I sent a letter.

That's not enough—that's not enough—the farmers of this province deserve better from this government. They deserve action. They deserve a Premier that stands up for the agriculture sector. He's taken on the federal government in so many other things, and yet when it comes to agriculture, the backbone of the Manitoba economy, nothing, not a word. He remains silent on this matter of so much importance to all of us in this province. It's critically important that farmers have the ability to move grain. It's not acceptable that the railways are allowed—say, well, we had a lot of snow. It's not our fault. Nothing we can do about it.

* (15:10)

The rail service in this country has to be able to ship product, whether it's grain, whether it's manufactured products. Canada, Manitoba have a record of being good at some things, and this government is destroying one of those things with its inaction, with its—its complete ignoring the fact that

our farmers cannot move their grain. Our farmers cannot meet their obligations. Our farmers are suffering because of that and that's why we bring this forward today and we hope that everyone will support us and we'll have a good debate and come up with some concrete action that will help our farmers, that will help Manitoba, that will put an end to this backlog and move grain in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Welcome back. It's certainly nice to be back. It seemed like a pretty short time away.

Interesting the members opposite would raise the matter of urgent public importance today on this particular issue. Clearly, this is a federal issue that the members opposite are raising. It's interesting they found a new desire to discuss federal issues when, over the last couple of years, we've been challenged by the federal government in terms of their health transfers and certainly those transfers aren't what we've expected as a government. And certainly the members opposite weren't bringing those issues to the House when they had a chance to and, quite frankly, it's quite astounding they found this new interest in what is a federal jurisdiction.

This particular issue's been in the media for some time now, Madam Speaker, and certainly there is a lot of discussion about this particular issue. I know we suffered through this particular issue a number of years ago, and there has been some modifications made within the industry to try to address when we do have these successful crops and, quite frankly, we are very fortunate in this part of the world to have a good crop last year. And certainly hats off to our Manitoba producers for raising those tremendous crops. We do have some of the best producers in—certainly in North America and around the world.

I know the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) has been very active on this file. He has been talking with the federal Minister of Agriculture and the federal minister of transportation on this issue. I know the minister recognized early on this could be an issue when we did have such a large crop this past fall. And I know he's also urging the Senate to pass Bill C-49 as well, and that will certainly go a long way to help addressing this particular situation.

So, I know the minister has certainly been on this file. He's certainly been aware of this file. He also has been busy, as we heard today, bringing

new business opportunities, new employment opportunities to Manitoba in the agricultural sector, and certainly that's very important, too, when we look at the backlog of grain that we have. If we're able to process those commodities here in Manitoba then we don't have to ship those commodities by rail out and around the rest of the world.

So, certainly, a lot of work has been done on this particular file and I compliment the Minister of Agriculture for doing that work.

The member opposite referenced Churchill, and I want to make reference to the line going into Churchill. We realize the situation that there is an issue. It's certainly a very important issue but, again, one that we feel the federal government should—taking a lead role on in terms of dealing with OmniTRAX and getting that line replaced.

Certainly, we, as government, have been working closely with the community of Churchill, the council in Churchill, in terms of making sure that they have the commodities that they need and addressing some of those serious issues and some of the extra expense that has been incurred in the community. We've taken measures to assist that community in this regard.

And, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, we as a government find ourselves—ourselves actually defending two lawsuits from the previous government on the Churchill line and actually the Port of Churchill as well. So, bad decisions, bad agreements that were signed by the previous government we now have to defend as a government. So those are the issues that the previous government have left us with.

And, as far as the member indicating about the road conditions, well, clearly we recognize there's been negligence in dealing with those roads over the last number of years and I'll say probably going back 15 to 17 years. And clearly we have a lot of work to do in infrastructure here in Manitoba and we certainly as a government are committed to that, repairing that infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, I will say, I will recognize—as a government, we recognize this is a very important issue to Manitoba farmers, but I think this may not be the venue to discuss that. Clearly, our government has taken measures to address this issue with the federal government, and this really is the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to this matter of urgent public importance.

Madam Speaker: Does the member for River Heights have leave to speak to the urgency of this topic? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I will just make a few comments.

First of all, it has been said that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) has sent a letter. I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will table that letter in the Chamber so that it's available to everybody.

The second point that I would make in terms of this. The government has argued that it doesn't have any responsibility because this is, they say, a federal matter.

Well, I remember in the past when issues like this came up that there was an ability of governments to work with opposition parties to send joint measures to the government of Ottawa to have a all-party task force which travelled in Manitoba. We had one on agriculture, for example, when there was agricultural concerns. And that agricultural task force report was then sent to Ottawa. On occasion, we have had delegations, all-party delegations, go from here to Ottawa. We did this in relationship to justice and other issues.

And so this government is not without options in terms of being able to take this issue forward. And they should not be just shrugging it off as irrelevant to them as the government of Manitoba.

I think there's a lot of people in this province, particularly farmers, who would say that this government should start doing things instead of just saying, oh, it's somebody else's responsibility. That doesn't wash and it's not good enough.

Bill C-49, you know, the—most of the senators at this point are independent. I would hope that the government and the opposition are writing to the senators because they are now independent. As the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) so well knows, Justice Murray Sinclair has no party affiliation, and I'm sure he would be very receptive to a letter from the member for Flin Flon. And so I think that there are opportunities which the members in the NDP and which the members in the government should be taking in this regard.

I would like to talk briefly about the situation of the line to Churchill, you know. It is sad that we have

a government and a premier who are stepping back from being involved in Churchill, and really are doing very little. You know, there were times in the past where provincial governments played a major role in getting that line there in the first place. I think Premier Bracken, for example, played a major role in making sure that the line went to Churchill, and so it is not something which the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the government should be saying, oh, no, no, that's somebody else's responsibility.

The Premier and the government should be taking ownership of this and make sure that the situation is resolved. And it has now gone many, many months with the Premier just stepping back and the solution has not been coming and the rail is not—line is not open and the grain and other things—commodities which could go to Churchill and be exported through Churchill are not moving.

So the government needs to get on the ball in terms of looking at what it's doing in northern Manitoba, and particularly with regard to the Churchill rail line.

* (15:20)

With Dougald Lamont, the leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party, I was in Flin Flon and The Pas and Thompson and St. Theresa Point and Wasagamack and Garden Hill just a few days ago and heard from many people up there, and people are quite concerned about the lack of real plans and real action on the part of this government. They feel that the government doesn't really know where its going when it comes to northern Manitoba and it's about time that they get their act together instead of just saying, oh, we've got Yes! North or we've got Look North or we've got something else north or whatever it is. But that's not good enough. You need, actually, to be able to deliver on a difference for people in northern Manitoba.

So back to the situation with people in agriculture and the railways actually affect others. We talked about mining interests and other people who are shipping by rail. It is not just agriculture that's important to make sure that the railways are working properly.

We are, as a Liberal Party, are on board with getting the sections which are relative to transportation moving quickly through the Senate and we'll do our part in that respect. We are on board in terms of being ready to co-operate with the government on the advancing the position of the rail

lines through Churchill but there has been no ability of the government to reach out with a suggestion about what we could usefully do together instead of—this is a government which just blames other people instead of trying to shift the blame onto somebody else.

So, with those few words, Madam Speaker, I think this is an important issue and it would be reasonable to have a more fuller debate.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I agree with the government—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: The member has to ask for leave to make comments on this issue.

Mr. Fletcher: Oh, Madam Speaker, may I have leave to speak on this issue?

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to speak to the urgency of this debate today? *[Agreed]*

The honourable member for Assiniboia, and I would indicate that the comments should deal with the urgency, or not, of the motion and not the substantive component of the topic, but whether or not it is urgent that that debate occur today.

Mr. Fletcher: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for that clarification.

At a federal level, this is definitely a federal issue. In regard to the urgency I was involved in the height of the oil boom when the rail demands were great and the farmers were being squished out of the market and the government, the federal government, wrote an order which I co-signed which increased the fine on a per-day basis for the transportation of grain, and if they didn't meet the quota, and I'm off the top of my head here, I think it was 600,000 tons a day, the rail companies would face a fine and that is where the power lies in the federal government, and it can be done very quickly and I think it's a worthwhile point, but I also would agree with the Government House Leader about the urgency. But I think a lot of other issues have been brought up, but on this issue, it probably doesn't meet the test.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) should be debated today.

I would advise that proper notice of this matter as required by rule 38(1) was provided in a timely

fashion and I thank the member for Flin Flon for that.

Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I do not doubt that this matter is one that is of serious concern to all members of this House, as agricultural issues are a key concern of Manitobans and of this Legislature.

However, I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward and I was not persuaded that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today. I would note that there are other avenues for members to raise this issue including questions in question period, raising the item under members statements and grievances as well as during the upcoming budget debate. Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Could you please canvass the House for leave to have a limited debate of no more than one hour to discuss the urgent issue of railway backlogs across western Canada, which is delivering—delaying delivery of Manitoba grain and imposing serious financial constraints on Manitoba producers? As part of this request, I would propose that, again, the debate last no longer than an hour, that all speeches be limited to five minutes each, three speakers each from the official opposition and government caucus as well as any independent members who wish to participate in the debate. And I ask respectfully, Madam Speaker, that you seriously consider this request and that the House consider this request.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have a limited debate on the urgent issue of railway backlogs across western Canada, which is delaying delivery of Manitoba grain and imposing serious financial constraints on Manitoba producers? If the House agrees, the debate would proceed in the following manner: the debate will last no more than one hour, all speeches will be limited to five minutes each, three speakers each from the official opposition and government caucus as well as any of the independent members who wish to participate in the debate. Is that agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

The House will now proceed to grievances.

There are no grievances.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I must inform the House that Greg Selinger, the honourable member for St. Boniface, has resigned his seat in the House effective March 7th, 2018. I am therefore tabling his resignation and my letter to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancy created in the House membership.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you call Bill 11 followed by Bill 3?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider bills 11 and 3 this afternoon.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 11—The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act (Liquor and Gaming Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act Amended)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), Bill 11, The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act (Liquor and Gaming Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act Amended).

Debate is open.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I apologize for that delay. I thought the minister was up, so I apologize for that.

Well, I'm glad to be able to get a couple of words on the record here in respect of Bill 11, The Safe and Responsible Retailing of Cannabis Act, moved by the Minister of Justice.

So, as most folks in the House know, we are in the process of moving towards legalization of cannabis in Canada this coming July 2018, and some would suggest that's been long coming and I think that there are many advocates across the country that are supportive of legalizing cannabis and I know—we

know that Bill 11 seeks to legalize cannabis for users over the age of 19.

We know that the government's Bill 11 will also prohibit home growing of cannabis, and from what I understand, I think that only Quebec is the only other province that is limiting home growing. And I'm going to get into a little bit of these, but I just want to kind of do an overview again just to remind everybody what Bill 11 is all about.

* (15:30)

So we know that Bill 11 allows licensed retail stores to sell cannabis, and we know that bill allow—11 will actually allow municipalities, up until the year 2022, to ban the retail sale of cannabis.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So, certainly, on this side of the House, we support the legalization of cannabis and we welcome and urge the provincial government to work with all stakeholders that have been dealing with cannabis in a variety of different ways, including selling it and producing it, and that the federal government—and that the provincial government also works with the federal government to ensure that Manitoba is ready for the June deadline.

I think that it's really important that on this side of the House we really want to make sure that Manitoba youth are protected as we move to this new regime of legalization of cannabis and, you know, we're disappointed that the government still has not launched a public education campaign that teaches young people the effects of cannabis and the implications that it can have on brain development which I know that we've discussed in this House before that.

Some folks will say that brain development goes until about the age of 24. We haven't seen any of that public education to date and I would hope that the province by now would have a plan in place to be able to do that public education in respect of the effects of cannabis. It is so important that, you know, our youth understand fully when they participate in using cannabis what are the particular potential consequences of using cannabis.

So, you know, we understand that MPI was—they have their responsible driving campaign, so that was a good first step, but we certainly do need a targeted campaign for young people and their parents that focuses on the long-term effects of regular cannabis use.

I know that my son, my youngest son just turned 16 in January and, you know, I'm not fully, you know, aware of all of the stuff in respect of cannabis. In fact, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and I were just talking right now about how much cannabis has changed and all of these different strains and, you know, certainly, back in the day that wasn't necessarily the case when I was younger, and so I don't know really a lot about what's going on in respect of cannabis and the different kind of strains and what they're for and what they're not for and, you know, if you're wanting to utilize cannabis what you should be doing.

So I think it is incumbent on this provincial government to develop a public awareness campaign or a public education campaign for the schools, for the high schools, so that they, you know, that we create a, you know, within this new regime, we are giving students and youth everything that they need to be able to make really good and informed decisions while they're kind of debating whether or not to start utilizing cannabis or whatever choices that those young people make.

So I think that it is really, really incumbent on this government to start, like I said, if they don't already have a public awareness campaign, that they immediately start. It's only a couple of months until June and, certainly, I think that there would be a lot of work to get done so that we can prepare our youth for that.

Also, I think that Manitobans that we've spoken to were very disappointed that this government has failed to include a plan for edible cannabis within Bill 11. Again, it's not—I think, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), we know himself acknowledged that edibles are a very big part of the cannabis market and I would suggest to the government that actually as Canada moves towards this legalization regime that that market will actually get even bigger because that's actually what we've seen in the states, like there's all kinds of different products that you can now get cannabis in, all kinds of baking products and stuff like that.

So I think that it was quite disappointing and pretty much like short-sighted that the Premier or that this bill doesn't include for edibles, and so then what happens if it's not included in this bill? Does it make it illegal? I don't think that that's been fully fleshed out here.

And so, again, I think that as we move to this new regime, consumers and retailers need that

information so that they can be prepared in respect of whatever edible products they have in the queue here.

The other thing that we saw in respect of Bill 11—and, you know, it's certainly not only on this side of the House, but I think that there's been a lot of criticism—is that the Premier and the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) really did not explain to Manitobans why we are not allowed—or why the bill does not allow for growing cannabis at home. And I know that there's several different thoughts in respect of growing cannabis at home, but certainly there's been no rationale. We don't know who the Premier consulted with. We don't know what concerns were raised, if any. And so I would encourage the Minister of Justice to see if she would consider even just disseminating some of that, you know, that rationale why homey—home growing is not included in Bill 11.

And then we also know that the Premier didn't really consult with medical professions—professionals or addiction counsellors. And so I think it really does bring the question if there are legal opinions on these pieces in respect of, you know, home growing, which is going to be considered legal under the federal framework. So, if it is illegal or if it's nothing—it's this in-between space here—is it considered legal? Now, I'm not an expert; I'm not a legal expert—I'm glad that the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) will be speaking to this very shortly—but I do think that it poses those questions, and I hope that the Minister for Justice and the Premier have started to look at and hopefully will disseminate to this House what the legal opinion was and whether the Province has a constitutional—has the constitutional authority to ban home growing. I think that that is very important. And the Premier also failed to lay out what penalties—what the penalties will be for people who are caught growing a few cannabis plants. And, again, I think it's so important to understand that that's something that could easily be interpreted as legal for anybody that chooses to grow plants at home, because it is legalized at the federal level.

I would hope that the Minister of Justice actually offers this House some clarification in respect of that, and perhaps we'll see that at standing committee with some of the presenters and some of the questions that are there. And I'm looking forward to some of that because I—you know, everywhere that I've kind of looked and researched, there's been nothing that's been publicly stated by the Premier and the Minister of Justice in respect of this. And it

does cause quite a bit of a concern in respect of this grey area.

So, you know, we also, obviously, here on this side of the House, want Manitobans to have a seat at the table. They deserve to have their voices heard in respect of cannabis, this cannabis act. So—and it's interesting that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has said that his primary concern in respect of the legalization of cannabis was—has been or is to keep cannabis off the black market and out of the hands of gangs. And yet, you know, at the same time, actually, the Premier dissolved anti-gang strategies and youth prevention programs which helped youth avoid street gangs and engage in drug trafficking. So it kind of seems to be a little bit off there in respect of his commitment to, you know, keeping cannabis out of the hands of gangs.

And—be—we know, and I'm assuming everybody knows in this House that, you know, crime prevention is a multi-pronged approach and that this government, well, any government, must make those long-term investments to keep, you know, at-risk and vulnerable Manitobans safe. And so it doesn't make sense when the Premier is saying that his primary concern is to keep it out of the black market and out of gangs, and he's kind of done away with those safeguards or those programs to help prevent some of those things.

* (15:40)

The other piece that we've seen in respect of moving towards this, you know, legalization regime is that we've seen this government, you know, obviously cut—something that we bring up every day when we're in this House—but we've also seen that the government has failed to make investments in addictions and mental health supports for Manitobans.

And so we know, obviously—and I know that everybody in this House knows this—that we are really, not only in Manitoba but certainly across the country, we are in the midst of a real meth crisis in—here in Manitoba and, like I said, across Canada.

The member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and I had the opportunity to go to the Main Street Project just, I don't know, last month, I think, and you know, it was an opportunity to see first-hand really the important work that they do in respect of the most—honest—just the most marginalized and vulnerable, but also it was a really good opportunity to speak to those front-line workers that—including paramedics—

that are on the front lines of dealing with the current meth crisis that we're dealing with, and the resources that they need to be able to tackle in a robust and thorough way some of the things that they're seeing on the streets right now. And so we had an opportunity to speak with—what was her name, the paramedic? *[interjection]* Yes. So Jodi *[phonetic]*, who is a paramedic, and again she is such an extraordinary, extraordinary woman, and I really do want to take a moment just to honour her and all of her colleagues for doing just really extraordinary work and seeing things that, you know, most of us will never see, and for her, sharing her, you know, her expertise, but also her recommendations, and I think that one of the things that stood out for me and the member for Point Douglas was when she was talking about the level of meth now—remember she was saying that sometimes they are going three or four days without sleep and that there's just really not the infrastructure right now currently to be able to adequately deal with this issue here in Manitoba.

So, you know, we—I think it—there's something to be said that as we move towards this new legalization regime of cannabis, it can't come at, you know, to the detriment of that infrastructure that we need to be able to tackle this other piece. In fact, I would suggest to you that all of those pieces go hand in hand, and so I really would encourage the Province—and I'm sure that the minister has probably already toured Main Street Project. And I'm sure that she would agree with me that they do some pretty extraordinary work there, but they certainly do need a lot more resources and support to be able to tackle this issue, and so I hope that the government is looking at that. I would expect that the government would be looking at that.

So I want to just talk in some of the time that I have left in respect of—and it's something that we hear over and over—and I'm sure that everybody in this House hears over and over—is the safety component in respect of legalizing cannabis. So, certainly, I think every—all of us are—you know, none of us across Canada are kind of fully aware of what this going to look like and how it's—you know, what impacts it's going to have on our cities or in our communities. But one of the pieces is that, under the proposed Bill 11 is that no person under 19 will be able to buy, sell or possess cannabis, and so again I don't think that we've really gotten a rationale as to why the age 19. So I would like to hear more from the government in respect of why 19, and, you know, we would also support the government's efforts in

protecting young—the youth and their health and their development while also ensuring safety of youth on school grounds. But I think it's important to question whether or not Bill 11 will actually keep cannabis out of the hands of youth under 18 or under 19. What's going to happen in that year? The reality is—is that some people will still—under the age of 19 will still find ways to access it.

Now I'm not—again, I mention my son. My son is 16 and, you know, we've started having these conversations at home. So far—so far—he says he hasn't tried it, okay, and he says he has no intentions in. I think that's pretty naive to think that that would actually be the case, but whatever.

But I do—you know, as a mom, my primary concern—all of us is that, you know, if our children may choose to make these decisions to drink or try drugs or try cannabis, that they are safe. And so, you know, I'm not sure if we, you know, the rationale in respect of 19—and I just say this as a mom, that I would prefer that my son would be able to, if he chose to do it, that he would be able to go somewhere safe and that I knew that that product that he was buying was safe and that it was regulated and that it was bought in a safe space. Again, this is not something that I want my son to do, but I think it would be pretty naive to think that at some point he won't try it. I'm hoping that he won't, but, as a mom, I would want him to be pretty safe.

So—and again—I mean, again, like I said, we were talking—the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and I, we were talking about these kind of potency levels now and so, again, that brings me a lot of concern. So, you know, in many provinces, including here, the legal age of purchasing cannabis is the same—or no, will be the same as purchasing alcohol. So I don't know. I would really like to understand the rationale for 19 and whether or not, you know, the Province wants to reconsider that age or—you know, again, if there is a really good rationale, then I'd like to hear it.

It certainly does send, you know, conflicting messages to youth. If you can buy alcohol at 18 and cannabis at 19, then does the—do—are we pushing youth to alcohol? I don't know. I guess that's going to be—that will be seen and so—so that—I think that that's a huge issue. I think in respect of safety for families and safety for youth in respect of, you know, where stores are going to be located and where that's going to be allowed is also really important to be discussing here.

So, again, I want to just kind of reiterate in respect of the campaigns on cannabis. So we know that the—MPI launched their public campaign on the effects of driving while high or intoxicated to increase road safety. But, certainly, I think everybody in this House could agree that that's only one small piece of the hazards of cannabis that it can pose on Manitobans.

So I mentioned earlier that I think it's important and incumbent on the government to educate youth. But I would suggest that it's, you know, probably equally important to educate adults in respect of cannabis.

And I'll share with the House a discussion that I had with my cousin who is a—works in the CFS system, and she works—she's a prevention co-ordinator, so she tries to help. She goes into homes, and she tries to kind of identify some of the issues before children are apprehended and tries to work with families to be able to give them the tools and, you know, those resources and kind of mitigate any potential issues before their children are apprehended.

*(15:50)

And she was telling me that—well, we just happened to be talking one day on the—both of us were driving home after work and she was saying to me that she had such a headache. And she said—well, she said my name, but I won't say it, but she said, you know, every house, she says, oh—not every, that's an exaggeration—she said almost every house that I go in, she says, when I walk in there, she says, I can smell marijuana. And so she was getting headaches. And so we started to talk about, you know, this new legalization regime, and then she was asking me what the Province was doing in respect of, you know, the legalization of cannabis. And she, I thought, posed a really important question in respect of, you know, smoking cannabis in front of small children and what are the effects of that. And that's some of the campaigns that I think are so important, to be able to educate as we kind of go into this new space that we will all have to tackle, but certainly, I think that it would be beneficial to have those public awareness campaigns in respect of, you know, the hazards of smoking marijuana in front of small, small children.

So, you know, I bring that too, and probably I'm assuming that the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) has probably already heard similar stories, but I did want to share what my cousin had

said, and her concern. I remember she was quite concerned because she was saying that, you know, if she was getting a headache going in all of these different places, that she was just really worried for the children there. So I think that that's something that could be considered or looked into and I hope that the minister would look into that and take that seriously.

We also know that, you know, not only do, you know, I don't know much about it, but, you know, we know that in September, Prairie Research Associates asked 800 Manitobans about legal marijuana, and the survey found about 15 per cent of Manitobans who don't currently smoke marijuana would consider giving it a shot once it's legal. And so we know now, all of a sudden, that with the legalization of cannabis there are adults who may consider trying it for the first time. And again, we, you know, how—there's many different forms, obviously, in which to try it for the first time, like, the traditional cannabis way, I guess, smoking it, or—and somebody just told me that you can vape it, so I didn't know that, and non-traditional forms of edibles. So there really does need to, you know, just going back in respect of public education, there needs to be education in respect of these—for these users, for these adults that are going to be trying it for the first time, you know, how to keep themselves safe. And again, like I said, you know, keeping, you know, children that are around them safe as well, because certainly, you know, some of those edibles, as I was researching, especially the ones that are in the States, if everybody—or I don't know if everybody knows, but most people know I love baking, and some of them look super, super good. So you can imagine when young kids are looking at these baking, and there's nothing safeguarding them; if we don't put these measures in place, you know, who knows, maybe some of the kids can eat them.

So I think that I just wanted to concentrate on those two things. I know that a lot of my colleagues want to speak to it, and I would suggest that are probably even more knowledgeable on it in respect of—and I would say that the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) is probably better equipped to speak about some of the legalities of it, so I do want to just put those words on the record. And I look forward to some of the questions that I've posed and some of the concerns that we've heard on this side of the House. I look forward to those rationale and those questions being answered.

Miigwech.

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—excuse me—and may I wish you well in your endeavours of guiding us through this session, and as well, welcome back all members of the House, and look forward to a very productive session as we go forward.

I would like to recognize the member of St. Boniface, to put on record and congratulate him on his public service, in particular his tenure in the Manitoba Legislature. The member of St. Boniface is a St. James son, as is the member of Minto across the way, and we always certainly keep our eyes open for sunny St. James. I certainly enjoyed speaking to the member of St. Boniface about the old neighbourhood, and I was also, too, very appreciative of the member of St. Boniface's kind words to me that he gave me on my dad's passing. So I did want to acknowledge that although certainly we have different philosophical views, I did certainly find the member of St. Boniface as a gentleman and I certainly enjoyed our discussions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am honoured to speak to this bill today. All of my legislative colleagues in our government have worked hard to ensure that when cannabis is legalized it is done responsibly and safely.

I would like to begin by recognizing the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) for her tremendous work on this file. She has been a wise and capable leader as she steered Manitoba through discussions nationally and introduced prudent legislation provincially. She has been a leader from the beginning and has always been a vocal proponent of Manitoba's interests. At the national level, the Minister of Justice was co-chair of the Council of the Federation advising premiers.

Madam Speaker, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has also been a vocal defender of Manitoba's interests on this issue. He is well aware of Manitoba's concerns about the tight deadline for the legalization of cannabis, its supply and its safety. He has voiced these concerns to the Prime Minister a number of times, and we continue to tell Ottawa that July 2018 is simply too soon.

Madam Speaker, our government has not only been guided by the leadership of our Premier and the Minister of Justice on this file. We held the largest consultations ever taken in this—in the province of Manitoba. Cannabis was one of the key issues that we talked to Manitobans about. We heard that they wanted cannabis to be safe. We heard that they did

not want cannabis being sold alongside alcohol. We heard that they did not want cannabis being sold to minors, and to make sure that we take every precaution to ensure that that did not happen.

Before speaking directly to our government's legislation ensuring that the legalization of cannabis is carried out responsibly and safely, I want to underscore what an earth-shattering opportunity this is for—to us as legislators. Madam Speaker, it is not always common that legislators have the privilege of creating an entirely new piece of legislation from the ground up. For—this is one reason why I wanted to seek election. I take great pride in this work, making a difference in the lives of Manitobans and ensuring their safety is protected is truly an honour.

The federally imposed deadline of July 2018 compels us all to act to ensure that cannabis is sold responsibly and safely in this province. This was not on our government's agenda when we took power, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, our government has done, and will continue to do, its due diligence. This is a rapidly evolving issue with implications far beyond our provincial borders. As a government that is capable and responsive to the political will at the provincial and national level, we continue to ensure that the safety of Manitobans is paramount.

In our throne speeches, we committed to consult—consultation with stakeholders and necessary collaboration with our federal, provincial and territory partners, we will develop a legislative and regulatory framework that will protect children and youth from the exposure to marijuana and its use, minimize harm to users and address the dangers of drug-impaired driving, End of quote.

* (16:00)

Our government has done just that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have engaged in an extensive review of all facets of this issue in a variety of ways. Firstly, I was privileged to serve as chair of a caucus committee that examined this issue. I would like to recognize my committee who did the—a preliminary study on this issue: the honourable members from Seine River, Brandon West, Emerson, Kildonan, Radisson and Transcona. I thank you for your commitment.

Our ministers have been actively engaged working with a number of stakeholder groups to get their valuable input. This in addition to meetings with—that our Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) and Premier (Mr. Pallister) have been part of.

A number of departments have been engaged throughout this process as a part of the interdepartmental working group, including Justice; Growth, Enterprise and Trade; Crown Services; and Health. I would like to thank all of the members of Cabinet and their staff who worked incredibly hard on this issue, and their contributions were invaluable to my committee.

Our Throne Speech, in 2017, outlined our retail plan that we have formally introduced to the House in Bill 11. It reiterated our overriding goal of the safety of Manitoba families, those who choose to use cannabis and those who do not.

Madam Speaker, I would like to provide the House with an overview of the two bills that our government has introduced with respect to cannabis. Both bills have been crafted with the extensive work and consultation. They take a public health approach to legalization of cannabis while ensuring that there is a viable economic framework to keep it out of the hands of youths and schools. Safety and security remains our top priority as it has been through this whole process.

Firstly, it's described by the Minister of Justice in her introduction of Bill 11. Bill 25, The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act, was our government's proactive response to the upcoming legalization of cannabis. It ensures protection of Manitoba's youth, for non-smokers as well as numerous safety measures. Protecting Manitoba's youth from the risks associated with cannabis is a top priority for our government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Bill 25 amended child sexual exploitation and the human trafficking act, The Mental Health Act and The Public Schools Act, ensuring the safety of youth, patients and students. Those who choose not to smoke cannabis should not suffer from second-hand health effects. Bill 25 ensures existing restrictions on smoking and vaping and also apply those to cannabis.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 25 ensures Manitobans are protected from drivers that are impaired by cannabis. Bill 25, The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act, was our government's first step in ensuring that cannabis is consumed—is consumer—can be consumed safely.

Bill 11 continues with prioritization of safety, particularly in our youth. First and foremost, Bill 11 prohibits home cultivation of cannabis except for

those who grow it for medical reasons. They will not be affected, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This bill adopts age 19 as the age for possessing, consuming or receiving cannabis. Mr. Deputy Speaker, keeping cannabis out of our schools is very important to us and the stakeholders that we consulted. In answer to the member of St. Johns' question in regards to why 19: By 19, most students in high schools have graduated.

I would like to focus on the selling of cannabis and our government's plan that combines the best of both worlds of both private and public sectors. This approach was crafted after studying cannabis from seed to sale.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is from the supply to its selling. This can be broken down in three components. Firstly, production. It is essential that we secure the supply of cannabis for the open market. The black market does not offer a level of insurance, especially given concerns about fentanyl and other opiates. The production of cannabis will be federally licensed.

From production, the government of Manitoba, through the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation, will only buy wholesale from federally licensed producers. This ensures that the product sold in Manitoba is safe and consistent with federal regulations. This is well within our ability, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the government is already in the wholesaling business. We currently wholesale alcohol beverages; therefore, as we have established, we are more than able to safely purchase, warehouse and distribute a controlled substance.

Retail and distribution will be handled by provincially licensed private sellers who have entered into agreements with the MBLL to act as cannabis distributors. Our newly named Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority will inspect cannabis stores and ensure that restrictions regarding cannabis are followed. Private retailers have the expertise to sell regulated products to the marketplace, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They can do so with no overhead costs to the Manitoba taxpayers, and, again, we see this with alcohol where private wine stores are able to retail product bought from the Manitoba wholesale, which is the Manitoba government.

It is important to emphasize the training that private sellers will be required to complete prior to selling cannabis. As stated in the act, anyone

involved in the sale of cannabis must be successful—must successfully compete—complete a training course offered by liquor, gaming and the cannabis authority. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that mirrors the current approach of the sale of alcohol. Therefore, there is precedent in the Manitoba system to utilize this process.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the autonomy of municipalities. Bill 11 allows municipalities the right to prohibit cannabis retail stores in their community if residents confirm that choice by plebiscite. It should be noted any resident of Manitoba that's 19 years or older will have access to online retailing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government also recognizes the involvement of First Nations. The government will continue to engage indigenous communities, determining a local cannabis retail model, examine how regulatory issues could impact sales and distribution on First Nations reserves, consider participation of indigenous organizations off reserves and review policing with bound-band councils related to the sale and distribution of recreational cannabis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Josh Watt of the Manitoba School Boards Association stated, and I quote: This bill does address many areas that are common concern among school boards but also in the community at large. We are proud to stand with them in ensuring that our schools, society and our youth are protected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to reiterate what an honour and a privilege it has been to craft this legislation with my caucus colleagues. Led by our Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), Manitobans can rest assured that cannabis will be sold responsibly and safely, and I look forward to the next phase of legislation in regard to the legalization of cannabis in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm pleased to speak this afternoon to Bill 11 dealing with the legalization of cannabis, which we know will be happening if not July 1st of this year, at some date, likely, later on this year.

At the outset, I could acknowledge that this is a difficult issue for any government to address. Legalization, which, of course, is a matter for the federal government, was a promise of the federal Liberal Party in the last campaign. They won a majority in that election on this—in part because of

this promise, which, I think we can all agree was quite popular with a number of all-of Canadians, although certainly not unanimously by Canadians.

And let it be said that we support the legalization of cannabis with the appropriate regulation and the appropriate control. And we urge, we have urged, and will continue to urge, the provincial government to work with stakeholders and to work as co-operatively as possible with the federal government to ensure that Manitoba will be ready for the deadline, whether it's July 1st or some deadline after that time.

* (16:10)

But, of course, we know that the question is now in the hands of an unelected Senate, but that's beyond the scope of what we can talk about today.

It's fair to say and I have—I believe I put on the record with respect to Bill 25, I've some sympathy for the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson). It is not possible to satisfy everybody when bringing in legislation to regulate and to control cannabis. I suppose I have some taste of that when I was the minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor Commission. I actually opened the Liquor Mart in the city of Steinbach, in or around the year 2006. As far as I know, and from reading *The Daily Bonnet* every day, it appears that not only has Steinbach continued to exist, Steinbach has continued to grow and, in fact, is now the third biggest city in the province of Manitoba.

The record will also show that Mayor Goertzen was present. The record will also show that I did invite the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), but, as he told me, he wanted lots of notice so he could be triple-booked on that date.

So I say that, perhaps, to be a little bit lighter than some of our speeches this afternoon. But to appreciate that when there is a move of this type, not everybody is going to be pleased with every aspect of the bill. And that's why we will be interested in having this bill proceed to a committee. We'll be interested to hear what Manitobans with vastly different perspectives might have to say about this bill, with the goal, of course, of making the bill better. And I don't know what amendments may and they come as a result of that, but, on behalf of Manitobans, we will do our job as the opposition. We'll listen very carefully to what people have to say, and we will do our best to put forward ideas, if they come forward, to make this bill even better.

Now, we could spend half an hour nitpicking at particular issues in this bill; I'm not going to do that. I'm actually going to speak about some broader issues.

Let me say at the outset that we are somewhat comforted that this government, despite their general antipathy for public enterprise, has recognized the value of the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation. We know from this bill that MLLC will continue to have a major role as being the sole organization which will purchase cannabis, which is produced, hopefully, with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) being interested, hopefully, a successful Manitoba agricultural product, and it will then be the MLLC that will then effectively sell the product to retailers in the province.

Now, we had maintained from the start that the best way to achieve the best possible control over retail sale of cannabis would be to extend that step one further and have cannabis sold, through the large part, through Liquor Marts or stand-alone retail stores run by MLLC. That's not the way this government chose to go. I'm not going to spend a lot of time today debating that. That is this government's choice. Simply to say I believe that there has been a chance lost to have the best possible regulation, but we will work with the government to try to make what's left as solid as possible.

Of course, I believe every member of the House truly wishes that our youth can be protected as cannabis legalization approaches. I don't think there's any member of this House, though, that is naive enough to believe that youth are not already able to get their hands on cannabis, whether it's in their friend group, whether it's at their school, wherever it may happen to be; we have to acknowledge that that has occurred. And, frankly, even in the best possible system, we have to acknowledge that youth are going to continue to get their hands on cannabis. And this is where I think the government does need to step up and, along with Bill 18 moving ahead, the government does need to push ahead to launch a meaningful, effective public education campaign with the goal of educating young people and their parents about the effects of cannabis and the implications it can have on brain development beyond the age of 18 or 19 and onward.

We've all seen MPI's responsible driving campaign, and we agree that this is a good first step, that it is important for people to understand the risks of using cannabis and then driving, but there are

risks that go far beyond simply getting behind the wheel. And I'll have some more to say about that in my time this afternoon.

It's clear the government needs to provide a targeted campaign for young people and their parents that will focus on the long-term effects of regular cannabis use. Again, going beyond the hope that every member in this House has that people will not get behind the wheel after using cannabis, there's a bigger picture as well, and it has to be a campaign which is not going to insist upon abstinence from cannabis, that's not going to be in words that young people will ignore, but that's going to be effective and provide the best possible information so that young people can make the best possible choices.

Now, there are some other concerns I think we'll hear about at committee. Earlier on, of course, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) had acknowledged that edible cannabis products would be a big part of the cannabis market. There were some Manitobans who have expressed their disappointment that at least for right now the government failed to include any plan at all for the sale of edible 'cannabil' products in this bill. That may, of course, force the sale of edible products, again, into the hands of the black market and organized crime. I hope that the government will be more clear on that and we can be seen as moving ahead on products which, some people—I believe the committee will tell us, can have a positive impact on people's lives while avoiding a lot of the dangers that we are all aware of. Now, I think that consumers and retailers need that information as soon as possible, so they can be best prepared.

Now, one of the items which will stand Manitoba quite apart from other provinces is Manitoba standing almost alone in the decision to ban Manitobans from growing cannabis at home. The federal legislation would allow for individuals to have up to four cannabis plants in their home. Manitoba and Quebec are the only provinces which have said they will not be following the federal standard and they will not be allowing any cultivation at home. I'll have some comments about that. There are arguments on both sides of the issue, and I am hoping at the committee that we will hear from people, some people who will say they haven't really been consulted before to weigh in on what I appreciate is not an easy decision. I'll have some more to say on that in just a few minutes.

With respect to that choice, though, the Premier's never indicated whether a legal opinion was sought

on whether the Province even has the authority under the Constitution to ban home growing. The member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) has put that concern on the record, and I'll have some more comments about that and how the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), hopefully, at committee can make things just a little bit more clear.

We're also concerned at this stage that the government has not laid out what the penalties will be for people who are caught growing a few plants. What happens if somebody does have four plants? What will the penalty be? Will they still be subject to criminal forfeiture laws, which have been a very effective tool in this province at taking down large grow ops? The Minister of Justice is aware of the successes of that program. She's also aware of the benefits when it's been possible to return proceeds from the criminal property forfeiture program to victims, to victim groups and to police services across Canada. The question is, though, is someone who has four cannabis plants in their house, is that someone who could conceivably be subject to criminal forfeiture legislation and is that the right policy choice. I hope there'll be more clarity coming forward from the government because I think it's an important thing to discuss, and we do want Manitobans to have a seat at the table. They deserve to have their voices heard by government.

We know on the debate on Bill 25 there were many provisions which failed to take into account the needs and the requirements of those who use medical marijuana, and it was very clear in my questions of the minister and the minister's comments that until I raised that in this House there'd been no effort to consult with people, a large number of people in Manitoba, who rely on medical marijuana, and I believe there will be some other viewpoints brought forward in committee.

Bill 11, to make it very clear, does not deal with medical marijuana. It's only the retail sale of recreational cannabis, that's true, but there are always issues this government is going to have to be more clear upon just to make it abundantly clear to all Manitobans where we're going.

And I want to pick up on something that the member for St. Johns said. The Premier has said that his primary concern is keeping cannabis off the black market and out of the hands of gangs. Having been the Attorney General of Manitoba for five years, I have a fair amount of sympathy for that view and some understanding of this.

* (16:20)

I would point out it's this Premier (Mr. Pallister) that then cut the funding for anti-gang strategies and youth prevention programs, cut the funding for a special task force of the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service which actually were taking down some of the larger gangs in Manitoba. I wish the Premier would be more consistent with his words and his actions, as he lectured us on just this afternoon in the House.

As well, we know that crime prevention has to be a multi-pronged approach. And we are hopeful that the legalization of cannabis will take value away from criminal gangs and other organizations. We do hope that it will reduce the black market, but we need to make sure that there's still long-term investments needed to keep at-risk Manitobans safe. If it frees up police officers to devote more time to other criminal activities, we applaud that and we hope that that will be a benefit to the province.

So, when we look at what the bill will do, it'll provide that under this legislation no person under 19 will be able to buy, sell or possess cannabis. And let me repeat what the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) said, and what we have said publicly, we do support the government's efforts in protecting youth health and development while ensuring the safety of youth on school grounds. And I believe the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston), who has experience not just in this House but as a school trustee, put some words on the record that are certainly reasonable about the desire to keep youth safe.

I wonder, though, whether this bill will actually have unintended consequences. In most provinces, the legal age which has been determined for the legal purchase of cannabis matches the legal age to purchase alcohol. We question whether the legislation will keep cannabis out of the hands of 18-year-olds, because, as the member for St. Johns said, as I believe the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) has raised as a concern, we now have a situation when legalization occurs that someone who turns 18 who's considered to be of the age of majority for everything else, whether it's voting, whether it's being able to work on the census, whether it's being able to do any one of a number of other things, is left in the position where they can walk down to their Liquor Mart and purchase as much rye whiskey as they want but they are

forbidden by law to purchase or even possess cannabis.

And I appreciate where the government is coming from. We know there is evidence that suggests that the development of the brain continues after the age of 18. I wonder, though, at the unintended consequence of telling a person who's 18 years old that they can go and drink as much alcohol as they want but they cannot legally consume a cannabis product in the province of Manitoba.

The fact is that people under 18 will still find ways to access it. Unfortunately, it will then be by illegal means, whether it's by the illegal resale of items purchased by those over 19 at a retail store or whether it continues to be the black market. We are concerned that 18-year-olds, instead of buying cannabis from federally regulated producers, as the government has put on the record, with quality control and potency labels, will then spend a year getting cannabis from the black market without those same kind of controls.

Now, I know that the government will say, yes, but many other provinces have set the legal age at 19. It's important to notice that Alberta has a legal age to buy alcohol of 18 and the province of Alberta has also set 18 as the appropriate age for purchasing cannabis through their system.

We also hope the government will take steps to educate adults who are new to cannabis to ensure that they act responsibly and in the best interests of all of us on the road, their children and our communities. And as I've said, there needs to be more work by the government to educate youth on the impacts of prolonged cannabis use, and we need to see more effort and more information coming forward from the government as we get closer and closer to this date.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you and I actually, although members may not know it, have particular knowledge of how legalization of cannabis has rolled out in other jurisdictions. Of course, the Deputy Speaker and myself, we had the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Council of State Governments, and one of the major topics being discussed was how legalization had rolled out in different American states. Very different structure in the United States, because there is criminal law federally, there is also criminal law that states are able to pass, and unless there is a direct conflict, states have a lot more control over those things than provinces do. But even at that, we've had, as many people know, states like

like Washington and Colorado that have gone ahead to legalize cannabis within their jurisdictions with certain controls still imposed by the federal government.

And it was very interesting. There were a lot of Canadians in the room from all jurisdictions trying to understand that—what was going to happen. There were a lot of individuals from Nevada, which was moving ahead very quickly to legalize cannabis. Also a lot of delegates from California, which was also moving ahead at a pretty quick rate to legalize cannabis as well.

And there were a number of lessons that were provided to us by Washington and Colorado. The first was, I think, a common sense message that in both of those states, as in other states and in Canadian provinces, there is already a substantial amount of people who are using cannabis and that the legalization does not mean the end of the world.

Those states also were cautious in saying that although there is a potential revenue gain for jurisdictions that has a positive impact, it's important neither to completely ignore that nor on the other hand to exaggerate the tax benefits which may come.

I know I have seen information which has been provided by people with a strong view one way or the other. I have read reports of how terrible things are in Colorado. I've also read reports about the windfall in Colorado of tax revenue without any negative impact.

I think we all know the reality is somewhere in the middle of that and there exists the possibility for Manitoba to receive more tax revenue. We acknowledge there will also be more obligations put on Manitoba by regulation, as well as the cost of our police service of making sure that reasonable steps are taken to manage cannabis in the province of Manitoba. But these are questions that other Canadian jurisdictions and many American jurisdictions are also having to deal with.

So let me speak with some of the time I have left specifically about some of the particular concerns that have been raised. One of them, of course, is cannabis use and driving. I had an excellent meeting with the executive director of MADD Canada, a gentleman by the name of Andrew Murie. I know that the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) is familiar with him.

I went for lunch with Mr. Murie and got MADD's take on legalization of cannabis, and

to my surprise MADD Canada was actually, I suppose, cautiously optimistic that the legalization of cannabis, if handled properly, would not result in a great increase of people driving under the influence. Much as I put on the record earlier on, I think MADD Canada realizes there are already people that have been driving under the influence of cannabis and perhaps this is an opportunity to make people's obligations far more clear, and also to come forward to make certain practices abundantly clear.

Working with MADD Canada over the past number of years, it's always been clear that MADD Canada has not suggested that abstinence is absolutely necessary, what MADD Canada has always maintained is the need to separate the act of consuming, whether it's alcohol or now cannabis, from the act of driving. And MADD Canada was very practical with some ideas on how provinces and how police forces could manage to make sure that they are protecting people on the roads from people using cannabis, while at the same time not unfairly targeting and prosecuting people who may have a very low level of THC, the active ingredient in cannabis, not having false positives for people who may not pose any risk.

And, as I've said, MPI has launched its public campaign on the effects of driving while high to increase road safety, which is one part of the hazard that cannabis can pose on Manitobans. You know, my colleague the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), has talked about the general attitudes of Manitobans about the legalization of cannabis, the survey found that a number of Manitobans, about 15 per cent of Manitobans who don't currently use cannabis would consider trying it once it's legal.

We need to make sure that those people are given the appropriate information on what impact that has on driving; how long is a reasonable time after consuming the product not to drive; and what can be the long-term impact. And there's a lot of work yet to be done on that, and we look forward to the government really stepping up and trying to provide some better information.

* (16:30)

And one of the other things I know that police in Canada have been working very hard on is coming up with an appropriate roadside test. Now, in Canada, of course, everybody has the ability to know that the legal threshold for driving without breaking the law and the Criminal Code of Canada is 0.08. This number did not appear when people first began

driving vehicles. This was a number that came out over time that is now quite understood and quite easily determined now because of the technology that's available roadside. People are able to blow at roadside. If they blow over a certain amount, they are then—they can then be arrested and forced to give a blood sample, which can give a much more certain level of their blood alcohol content. Even at that it's not a perfect system; there can be people over that limit who, to the naked eye, might appear to still be able to drive. There are also people at much lower blood alcohol contents that can still actually be quite impaired. And that's why provinces, starting with Manitoba, but now adopted by most other provinces, have taken 0.05 as the appropriate test for impairment under provincial law.

It's not quite as easy with cannabis. And I, again, appreciate the struggle of the federal government and the struggle of provincial and territorial Justice ministers to come up with the right number. We also know that the technology that had been used in certain American states may not be as effective in Canada because of our rather severe climate, which is often the case when police officers are doing roadside tests. I think we'll need to have a lot more discussion about this to make sure that we have the strongest possible laws but not laws that are going to create false positives and potentially impact people from being able to drive when they were not a threat.

The last thing I want to address, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the ban on home growing. I believe the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) has talked about that. I had some chance to put some comments on the record earlier on. This bill will absolutely prohibit people from cultivating cannabis in their own home. And I believe, from listening to the Justice Minister, that this is being done as a response to the concerns of the Canadian chiefs of police. The Canadian chiefs of police say that home growing will create some enforcement issues for police. We do know from the Council of State Governments meeting that if the rules are too loose it can result in a certain amount of cannabis being out there that doesn't have the protection and the certainty of a controlled system.

We support and understand these concerns, but we do wonder if home growing is an option this government is considering in the future since the federal government is legally allowing it and whether this government has thought about the fact that this is going to be quite confusing for Manitobans. When, whether it's July 1st or some later date this year,

legalization occurs, it is strange that someone who lives in Winnipeg will be unable to cultivate cannabis in their home. However, if they have a cottage at Lake of the Woods, they will be able to grow cannabis plants out there. It seems strange that someone who lives in Flin Flon, Manitoba, will not be able to grow cannabis in their home, but they can drive, and just so members opposite know, not west, but they can drive south, to Creighton, Saskatchewan, where it will be legal to grow four cannabis plants in their home.

And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) hasn't indicated exactly whether there was a legal opinion that was sought on whether the Province can even do this. The Province has certain rights in the Constitution under property and civil rights. That would run up against the federal law—federal right to make criminal law. I would hope that there has been some counsel received on this, an opinion received. As the member for St. Johns said, I think it would actually be helpful, not just for us as legislators but for Manitobans in general, if the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) would be prepared at committee or otherwise to share that information with Manitobans so they can better understand the Province's choice.

And, again, are there direct analogies to what we do with respect to alcohol? Well, not really. Of course, anybody who wants to, in the province of Manitoba, can brew their own beer. I happen to know some people who are very good at brewing beer in reasonable quantities in their own home. There actually are no limits on how much beer you can brew. At the same time, home distilling is not allowed. That is considered an illegal act, and, if you happen to have a still in your house or your farm or elsewhere, it is considered a fairly serious offence.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

So it's not simply the ability to grow or to create a product which can have the impact of making someone unsafe to drive or unsafe to use machinery that clearly is the issue, because home brewing is alive and well in Manitoba. So I know there will be Manitobans who feel strongly about this, who will want to come to committee and have the opportunity to speak about this. I know as well—I'm hoping that we'll hear from the police in the course of the hearing who will then also be able to tell us exactly what their concerns are.

I know that, in the course of the debate before this law was brought in, we heard from landlords who raised concerns about people growing cannabis

in apartments. It is perhaps a little strange that now someone will be able to grow any other plants using any amount of hydroponics and any amount of energy, generate any amount of moisture. People can have as many pets as they wish unless there is some requirement in their lease.

It would seem to me that this could have been dealt with a different way if the true concern was protecting landlords who, just as they can have a no-pet clause, could have a no-cannabis clause, but I suppose we'll hear from people on that as well, and even if it's a concern for people growing cannabis in an apartment because it may disturb their neighbours or other people, I simply don't see that those same concerns exist when it's individuals who are growing up to four cannabis plants in their own home.

I don't know that it's really a big moral question. Perhaps it's a bit of a legal question. I'm hoping in the course of the hearing on Bill 11 that we will hear Manitobans with some different viewpoints, and I do think that this is something the government should leave open as a possibility based on the best possible evidence and perhaps consider changing the law.

I believe that Manitobans will also want to know what the punishments will be then for Manitobans who are found to be home growing and what will the police want to do if they receive a tip or they see a plant in the window or, as sometimes happens, first responders appear at a house and there are cannabis plants, what should happen.

I don't want to minimize the impact of large-scale home-grow operations. As minister of Justice, I had the opportunity, as I expect the current Minister of Justice has had, to tour homes where there has been a major home-grow. A lot of cannabis plants, because of the humidity, because of the heat, destroys houses, and no one would want to move into a house that has had a commercial home-grow operation in it. If we're talking about four plants, I believe we're talking about something very, very different, and it will be very helpful to hear from people.

I also, just in conclusion, want to mention one strange part of the act which seems to bring in municipalities who've been unwilling partners all the way along. Section 101.2(2) of the bill says that if there are complaints about the operation of a cannabis store, the MLLC will investigate. They also require the municipality to provide information, and the executive director may request the municipality take part in the mediation and the complaint. It's a

strange section. I expect we'll hear, perhaps, from AMM as we move forward on what we agree is—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Prior to me recognizing the member for Transcona, I am just finding it a little bit difficult to hear. I know that there's a number of conversations going on, and I wonder if those members that are having conversations fairly loudly with each other might move to a loge or to the back of the room. It would make it much easier to hear the member in debate.

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the time to do something I never really imagined previous to my life as a politician, to talk publicly about cannabis or marijuana. But, before that I want to acknowledge some of the words that were made by my predecessor, the member from Minto, and he hit on quite a few issues that I, too, agree with and concur that this is an important thing, but I'm wondering, and I just want to make sure that he wasn't inferring earlier on because he was there that they put a liquor outlet in Steinbach, if that's the reason that it's now worth the trip to go to Steinbach. Perhaps it is.

* (16:40)

One of the things about this issue that I've really seen is—it's a fascinating issue. It's given us opportunities to learn on a regular basis and tell people when we go out and meet with them, what are you doing in the Manitoba Legislature, and one of the things I've said to them is I'm on the caucus cannabis committee, which is—will always lead itself to questions about are there snacks there. There will be always jokes. I will quickly dispense with some jokes, quickly, a few puns. I will quickly weed out any bad puns that I might have here, as the public has a high expectation of us nipping the black market of cannabis sales in the bud, but this isn't a humorous or funny situation. This is one of the more important things we do here in the House. It's a very, very serious subject. We're here at a time in history where this legislation we'll be making will be extremely impactful to the future of society.

The legislation of cannabis retailing is something that is definitely a hot-button issue. When we go out as—in this life and we attend parties or we attend events or we have town hall meetings, we want input from people on different things. We want to hear what they have to say about health care, about education. Recently, we were talking about

organ and tissue donation and one of the things that can get people talking when you go to a party is what do they think about cannabis legislation, what do they think about legalizing marijuana.

And the responses I get are varied and unexpected from different people. I've had a school administrator who says, absolutely, we need to legalize it, it needs to be, we've been fighting it for too long. It's happening; let's get a safe type of product into the hands and teach the children—the youth about it. I've talked to university students who adamantly deny that we should be legalizing it, they said it's not necessary, which you'd think maybe perhaps the young people would be much more in for of—in favour of it. I've had seniors in my office who say, what are you making all the rules and regulations, just let people do what they want to do. Well, we can't obviously do that. We can't have people walking around and smoking a joint anywhere they want to. It's been a fascinating time learning, it truly has.

Well, our job here—and thank you to the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) for her hard work in this. I know they continue to work hard in developing the framework and legislation. I met with a friend of mine who's on the Winnipeg Police Service the other day. I haven't seen her for quite some time and I said where is your new job, what are you doing, and she said, well I'm—thanks to you guys, I'm working my tail off trying to come up with the regulations that will control how cannabis is regulated. She goes, it's a lot of work and it's crazy. So we have to strike a balance.

So thank you to the minister for moving forward with this and it's really nice—I'm very happy that we've discussed some of the things here and looking at legal ages here. We've talked about it and we know some concerns about the legal age of being 19 here in Manitoba. I personally like the idea that it's 19 across the three provinces. Yes, it doesn't jibe with what alcohol legal age is here, but I do remember going to my child's high school one day and standing outside of the office, and he was in grade 10, he was newly in high school, and I found it different—is the term I'll put—when I'm just standing here and one student said to the other, what do you mean you don't know what kind of beer you're drinking. I'm concerned with the, shall I say, the normalcy of cannabis culture within our society and schools. It already exists if students want to use it, but I like the idea of having the age a little bit higher to perhaps push that slightly out of high school.

There will be those that still want to get it and will still find a way to access cannabis, but hopefully we can push it a little older.

We know the science is there. On certain aspects of cannabis use, science is evident that it does impact the brain's development up until the age of 25. So change the culture and, hopefully, we'll get less of the young people using it. We really want to—this is put in place because our goal is to keep it out of the hands of youth, keep it out of schools. We don't want to have a hard impact on, or a detrimental impact, on our next generation.

I was once at an event in Portage la Prairie a year ago, and I'm learning about this as with all of us. I can proudly say that I wasn't ever a user, have never tried it, even though I know many people that have. I, like the member from St. Johns, hope that my children don't. They may, though. And we have put together the framework to make sure that if they choose to, they choose to use this, that it won't impact them for a lifetime. There was a gentleman, though, in Portage la Prairie that pleaded with me at a dinner, saying, please don't legalize it. Why, I asked. Why? And he said, well, I used it. I used it, and because—I have mental health issues. He personally anecdotally says his cannabis use is why he has mental health issues, why he has struggles in life. Perhaps it is. Perhaps, had we had the protections in place, he would have not been in the situation that he's in now, I'm not sure. But our job is to listen.

It's been mentioned that we're now in the second stage. We've awarded some opportunities to retailers to sell cannabis. I'm very excited that one of those retailers is in my constituency. Delta 9 is a fascinating business. I was able to tour it and see some of their production within there, and how it's grown aeroponically, not hydroponically, where the plants literally hang—the roots hang in a bucket with the nutrient liquid flowing over the roots and absorbing it. They've got these shipping containers for all the different strains, and there are an enormous amount of different strains with all different levels of THC and CBD in them. They've got them all controlled. But, as we move forward from a retailer like Delta 9 who's partnered with Canopy, and are looking to be the retailer, it's a private retail model we're looking at, and we want the—what's the term I'm looking for?—I want the expert not so much opinion but well-educated retailers, people who know about the CBD levels, the THC levels, and how it can impact.

We talk about it being 18 years old for alcohol, and when my child wants to go and turn 18 and say, Dad, I'm old enough, I'm going to—let's go to the liquor store and can I get something to go to the lake with. Okay, well, he—Dad, should I get the Jack Daniels? No, no, son. Maybe a bottle of wine. Maybe a cooler, maybe a beer, because we know the health risks of a young kid taking a bottle of hard liquor and downing it foolishly. The foolishness of youth sometimes. We know that if they have too many beers, it's going to come back on them.

This marijuana that's being sold today is not what it was years ago. It's much more potent. There's different strengths. So thank—I'm thankful that we've selected some good retailers, and they will have the expert educators within the retail systems, within their stores, teaching the next generation about proper—or what it can do to them, what it—what harm it can do or what they can expect when you—it—we know that a company like Delta 9, the economic benefits to the company, the community, the province are substantial. We know that cannabis retailing will definitely create revenue, but there will be costs. We know the costs will be substantial when it comes to law enforcement, mental health supports that will be required. We know there's going to have to be more education at a younger age.

* (16:50)

When I go to town halls or when I go to seniors residences and they want to talk about marijuana, they ask what do I think and I say I'm worried. I'm worried because we have to put things in place. And no matter what rules or regulations or laws we put in place, we know somebody's going to be hurt by this. So we want to minimize that as possible—as much as possible.

I've got a magazine here, BotaniQ, which has some data, and one of the things that it's—mentioned in here is a number: Thirty-two per cent. When retail marijuana businesses opened in Colorado in twenty thousand—2014, there was a 32 per cent increase in marijuana-related traffic deaths during the same period. That's a substantial and sobering number. Hopefully, we won't see numbers like that here. But I know—and I've told people, I've said, because of this someone will die, and it's very sad and sobering.

So I'm glad we're moving in the right direction and putting laws and regulations in place that are perhaps more stringent than some other people would like. They can always be changed in the

future. We want to do what we can to get the black market of marijuana off the streets. Will that stop the drug dealers? No, but, hopefully, through this, the law enforcement can focus on problems with opioid and other sorts of issues in terms of addictions.

In discussing—I know we're not really discussing medical use of marijuana, but I've asked a few doctors that are friends of mine about prescribing and asked if they do, and in general they say they don't because there's not really enough science and research. And, hopefully, as things change, as we change as a society, there will become more research of how it impacts society, and we can always adjust laws moving forwards. I know there's talk about edibles or ingestibles and that, too, can be formulated in the future.

Let's—we've got the timeline here. We've got a short time—thank goodness it's been extended a little bit—but we can do everything we can to get it right here in Manitoba. We've seen the information from MPI, we've seen the commercials, and it's really important to be able to change the culture. It's unfortunate, some of the people I've met with, the culture of marijuana use and driving is perhaps in some ways similar to the culture of alcohol and driving 20 years ago. I know a few guys who would say: I drive a little better when I've got a few shots under my belt. I've met with people who say: I drive a little better when I've had a toke or two. We know that's not the case, and, hopefully, in time and with public education we can absolutely change that culture.

There's so many more things to talk about and decide. The member from Minto mentioned it: What level and what is the standard of intoxication in terms of THC levels? Where will use be allowed? Will it be allowed in homes? Will it be allowed in rental properties to be used? Will it be allowed in parks? I know we've got a potential smoking ban in bars. These are all things that we're looking forward to discussing and, hopefully, we can come up with a best solution for our community.

It is a historic time, and I'm very proud to be part of the decisions that we're making here in our province. I'm proud very much to support this bill, and, as I've heard the opposition, I believe they encourage it, and I hope they continue to support it and continue to bring ideas to the table to create a framework for safe and responsible cannabis retailing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity to rise and debate here this afternoon and in particular to hear from members of the Conservative caucus cannabis committee, if I can—if that's the correct name of the committee. I believe the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski) was a member of that committee, the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston). I understand there are others from the government side who participated in that committee. And I appreciate the opportunity to hear from them because I'm curious to hear more about their work that was done, especially with regard to such an important topic, a topic that certainly concerns all members of this Chamber, and if—I would also say all Manitobans and certainly the folks that I talk to. And I think it was the member for St. James who said that he certainly understood how important this legislation was and how unique this opportunity actually is for us as legislators to be here when this decision was made by the federal government to legalize cannabis across Canada and for us as legislators in this province to be a part of doing that right and taking the steps to make sure that that's implemented in a way that respects all folks in Manitoba, weighs all the concerns that certainly I've heard and I know others have heard from constituents and from others. And it's a unique opportunity to take that—this really groundbreaking legislation handed down to us from the federal government and run with it here in Manitoba and implement it in a way that's—that keeps people safe and healthy and respects all sides of this debate.

So, when I hear from members of the Conservative caucus, Conservative cannabis caucus committee, I think that's what it was called—I listened intently. And I listened intently to hear some of the information that they could pass along because I have not seen the report that was put out by that committee. And so I'm hoping that if the members here who are in the Chamber that are listening along intently might have a copy of that, that might be worthwhile when we're having this debate to distribute it to all members of this House, because I understand there was consultations done, there was information gathered, and I'd like to see that data. I'd

like to see what Manitobans said, what the polling—if there was any polling done or any kind of focus groups or outreach or town halls. How was that information gathered, and what did that information exactly show, because when I look at the piece of legislation that we're dealing with before us here, Madam Speaker, I see several issues that are addressed? I see some that aren't, but I see several issues that are addressed, that, you know, either put us offside with other jurisdictions in Canada or put us offside with various stakeholders who have made their viewpoints known either, again, directly to me and to members of the opposition or in the media. And there are a number of stakeholders. So I'm struggling to understand why some of these decisions were made, and without the information that was gathered by this caucus committee, I'm at a disadvantage because I don't see that information; I don't see how those—how these regulations were arrived at.

So I think it's important if there is that information that that's passed along to all members of the House; that would be helpful. I mean, I would like to actually back it up, Madam Speaker, because, you know, on an issue such as this where I don't think there actually are very many partisan lines when it comes to this issue, certainly not in 2018; maybe in 2008 there would've been, or 1998 or certainly 1958. But, in 2018, I don't think there are those kinds of political divisions that we maybe have had in the past. And so, if it was a non-partisan issue, maybe a committee of the entire legislature might have been more appropriate. And I know that myself and others on the opposition side have a keen interest in this, as I said, brand new legislation, a chance to take a fresh look at how Manitoba can put its mark on this issue across Canada. Maybe there could've been—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Concordia will have 25 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

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<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>