

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 30, 2019

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I am pleased to table a 2018 Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba annual report and the 2019-2023 Five Year Plan.

And, as well, I'm pleased to table the 2018 Appeal Commission and Medical Review Panel annual report.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

National Indigenous Peoples Day

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): As the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations, I would like to acknowledge June 21st as National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada. National Indigenous Peoples Day corresponds with the summer solstice, the longest day of the year and a day of significance to many indigenous peoples who mark the day with celebrations of their culture and heritage.

The day provides time for reflection on cultural teachings that have been passed down through generations. It's a day for both indigenous and non-indigenous to experience and observe and learn about indigenous cultures as well as world views.

Along with the sharing of cultural and historical experience, this is also a time to acknowledge our continued path towards reconciliation with all indigenous peoples in Manitoba as well as across Canada.

Within Manitoba, there is a great diversity of indigenous languages, cultures and experiences. Our 'provent' is the home to Anishinabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Inuit, Dene, Dakota and the Metis nation. Manitoba is committed to building meaningful and respectful dialogue with First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities, to aid in the growth and development of our province's fastest growing demographic.

We are proud to say our department has almost completed our work to establish a renewed duty-to-consult framework, which will provide government with a foundation to promote respectful and strong working relationships in partnership with indigenous communities.

We are also proud to say that in only three years of government, these partnerships have led to the transfer of 85,784 acres of land to be set aside as reserve through the treaty land entitlement process.

Today we'd also like to recognize the Inuit community of Manitoba. A few weeks ago I had the wonderful opportunity to visit and chat with the 'tungasit' Inuit resource centre. They are quickly outgrowing their location and are providing great resources for employment, youth and the preservation of Inuit culture. Our government's very excited to continue and foster dialogue and partner with the Inuit people of Manitoba.

While there may be many successes to build on, there is still a lot of work to be done, and we encourage all members to seek positive change in their communities in order to engage and build relationships with indigenous communities.

This must be a top priority for our government as we keep moving forward on the path to reconciliation and work to repair the scars left from the legacy of residential schools, broken trust and generations of mistreatment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Today we are recognizing National Indigenous Peoples Day, which falls on June 21st.

It is a day to join together and celebrate the diversity of indigenous people and the profound contributions they have made to Manitoba culture. The history, art, traditions of indigenous peoples are

foundational to Manitoba's past and continue to shape its present.

As we celebrate indigenous culture, we also need to acknowledge the systematic oppression and discrimination that indigenous peoples have experienced and continue to experience. We need to pay particular attention to the challenges faced by indigenous women, girls and members of the LGBTQ community.

This day is an opportunity to reflect on how to respectfully engage with indigenous communities so that we can continue to move our province forward without holding indigenous peoples back.

But devoting one day to celebrating indigenous peoples is not enough. We need to take indigenous communities and their culture into account every day with every piece of legislation we pass.

As we move into June, which is Indigenous History Month, I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to educate themselves and learn more about the history of indigenous peoples in Canada.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Today we recognize National Indigenous Peoples Day. On that day we celebrate our diverse cultures and heritage across Turtle Island.

As it was my obligation to learn of your Columbus, I ask that you learn of our historical figures, as there are many.

Indigenous peoples in Canada have faced genocide, and the effects of colonialism continue to persist throughout our society today, indigenous children continue to be taken away from their homes and communities by the CFS system, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, over-representation of indigenous people in the justice system, and the high suicide rates in our communities.

Cultural genocidal policies were put into place with the intention to destroy the indigenous cultures, ways of life, families and communities. These practices continue to attempt to destroy our people's way of life.

We need deep transformative action to be taken towards reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships, instead of the lack of respect and consultation that this government has shown. Indigenous people are our future. Our communities need to be treated as equal partners so that we too can enjoy this free country.

Last night I was in committee. It was beautiful to see so many people speak in their mother tongue of Punjabi with the need for a translator. I never had the privilege to learn my own parents' languages growing up, as this right was taken away from both through the residential school system.

Madam Speaker, I dream of a Canada someday where I can speak in my own indigenous language on the land of my ancestors and that you guys will need a translator to understand me.

I am Anishinew.

Megwetch, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. James Constituency

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): Madam Speaker, as you are aware, the Manitoba boundaries commission presented its final report in 2018.

I wish to recognize the former constituency of St. James. It has been an honour and a privilege to represent one of the more established areas of the city of Winnipeg. St. James holds a great deal of history and continues to contribute greatly to our province.

I have felt such pride presenting at Bruce Park for a wonderful ceremony which is put on every Remembrance Day.

Madam Speaker, I have also very much enjoyed supporting one of the largest aerospace industries in Canada, much of which is located in St. James.

A memory I will always cherish was the support I received when paying tribute to my father here in the House, and I appreciated the support of all members at that time.

The people of the former constituency of St. James gave me that opportunity, and not many people have that opportunity to have a generation legacy sitting in this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, I am honoured to represent the former constituency of St. James in the Legislature, and I am pleased to continue serving my community by accepting my party's nomination in the new constituency of Assiniboia.

I look forward to having the opportunity to keep being a St. James-Assiniboia community representative.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Methamphetamine Crisis

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The Premier's (Mr. Pallister) response to the meth epidemic in our province has been to sit back and hope that it just goes away, but it's not going away and families are paying the price for this Premier's inaction.

Police believe that the rise in gun crimes across the province is a result of how severe the meth crisis has become. Right now, Manitoba's rate of firearm-related violent crime is double the national average.

Winnipeg is becoming more and more unsafe. We're not even halfway through the year and there's already been 19 people that have been killed, compared to 22 just last year. Those numbers represent the number of lives that have been lost and the number of families whose lives have been changed.

While meth is tearing communities apart, this Pallister government is dismantling our health-care system. They're closing ERs, despite record numbers of ambulances arriving at Winnipeg hospitals and despite the number of people getting treated for meth-related issues that is steadily increasing, which front-line workers have told this government they are not equipped to deal with.

* (13:40)

Instead of investing in harm-reduction strategies that health experts have been calling for, the Premier is simply throwing addiction reports on the ground and ignoring the advice of health professionals.

We know that Manitobans are struggling and we know that the current system isn't helping them. The question is, how many families are going to be changed because of this government's inaction?

The Pallister government is not meeting the needs of families or expanding supports for people struggling with mental health issues and addictions. This is shameful and demonstrates just how little this government cares about those who are struggling with addictions, their families and the communities who have become unsafe because of this Pallister government's inaction in addressing the meth epidemic in our province.

Andrew Seymour

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, two

years ago at the age of 12, Andrew Seymour was riding in a small boat together with his parents when it capsized. He responded courageously and calmly.

The boat flipped onto Andrew's mother, Allison, who didn't know how to swim. Allison describes the incident, saying: I didn't know what to do. I had no idea how I would get out, and all of a sudden I was out from under it and my son was saying, you're okay Mom. She later learned that Andrew pulled her out from under the boat. Andrew took charge, instructing his parents to hold on to the overturned craft, reassuring them as he swam the craft towards the shore.

Andrew's mother Allison says: I can't put into words how it makes me feel, for him to step up to the plate at 12 years old. When we should've been taking care him, he was taking care of us.

Looking back, Allison thanks the lifeguards and staff at the Winkler Aquatic Centre for the swimming lessons program. They taught him to swim and gave him the confidence, she said.

Regardless, Allison says the incident should alter people's perspective on the next generation. I think they will change the world, or maybe save it, she says.

Madam Speaker, Andrew Seymour received the rescue and honour award from the Lifesaving Society of Manitoba, presented to him by the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba.

He is attending class today, but I know all members of the Assembly will join me in recognizing Andrew for his bravery, for his courage, for reacting quickly, and we all wish him a very bright future.

Burrows Constituency

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): This is my last opportunity to speak before the House rises, so I wanted to use this time to talk about the community in—which I have the real honour of representing.

Over the last few years I have had the distinct pleasure to work alongside—with many different associations, groups and individuals through both legislative work and constituency case work.

In the North End community, new businesses have been established. We've worked with Sisler's Political Youth and Youth in a Green War. We've been inspired by Maples Met students. We've

celebrated I Love to Read and graduations with all the schools.

Madam Speaker, it is such a pleasure being able to participate in so many informative and fun events with the Gilbert Park youth group, various public forums, NorWest Co-op, ACCESS and NorWest food centres and many advisory groups.

Madam Speaker, these groups and activities are why I am so proud and grateful for my community, and that's why I want to say thank you to my constituents for entrusting me to bring forward your thoughts, ideas and concerns, and for allowing me the honour of assisting in any way that I can.

I want to thank my friends and family for the balance you bring into my personal life; my colleagues, even those of you who have pushed me to be stronger; my seat mate from Dawson Trail; and, of course, my Liberal caucus and all of our brilliant staff.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I wanted to give a shout-out to my constituency staff who have joined us today in the gallery today: my Tito Robert, my Tito Leo and my Ate Adelle. You are the best bosses and team that a politician could ask for.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and have a good summer everyone.

Service and Therapy Animal Day

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madam Speaker, throughout history animals have been integral partners for humans. From providing transportation, nourishment, to companionship and protection, we would not be who we are today without these beautiful creations.

I look forward to May 20th each year when I can celebrate Service and Therapy Animal Day with the many Manitobans who appreciate the gifts that we receive from our connections to animals.

Last year, Madam I hosted a reception for my Fort Richmond constituents here at the Legislative Building where my colleagues from this Chamber were charmed by Fernando, the therapy turkey from rescue farm 10 Acre Woods. We were also treated to a special visit from six-week-old puppies who were new recruits for Winnipeg police K-9 Unit.

To top off an already impressive list of animal visitors to the Legislative Building, members from Cloud 9 Ranch organized to have Arnie the quarter horse and Cracker the miniature pony grace us with

their presence. Madam Speaker, it was a wonderful day of smiles, gobbles, puppy love and horsing around.

This year, I decided to arrange a visit to Cloud 9 Ranch so that I could experience the wonderful benefits of horse therapy. Tara Reimer, the owner and manager of the ranch, was more than welcoming to our group who joined me for a team discovery exercise.

The member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé) and myself, along with our constituency assistants, Miriam and Miranda, all participated in learning about our strengths and weaknesses as a team.

Madam Speaker, it was a fantastic opportunity to learn how effective communication with each other can affect horses' responses. I would recommend this activity for any work group or even a family who wish to learn more about themselves and how to enhance their teamwork.

Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the kind people in this world who work with animals and help to bring out the best in us all.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

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

We have seated in the public gallery from H.S. Paul School 28 grade 7 and 8 students under the direction of Mike Johnston, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte).

Also seated in the public gallery from Warren Collegiate we have 35 grade 11 students under the direction of Lee Stewart, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler).

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us today from Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Bohdan Lukie, and from New Jersey, Christine Klufas, who are the guests of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski).

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

Madam Speaker: And we also, today, have two of our pages who are serving us for the last day, so I have a little note on each of them that I would like to read to you.

Marianne Bahalla will be graduating from West Kildonan Collegiate in 2019. She plans to pursue a business degree at the Asper School of Business. Following her undergraduate studies, Marianne would like to attend law school to become a corporate lawyer. In the future, Marianne would also like to backpack Europe as she is also interested in travelling.

Aside from her interest in business, Marianne is also a passionate musician. In her spare time she plays piano under the Royal Conservatory of Music program and also sings in chamber and jazz choirs.

The page program has helped Marianne gain an interest in politics and democracy. During her time as a page she has gained many valuable experiences as well as met many great people.

Marianne is grateful for her time in the Chamber and would like to utilize what she has learned in her future studies.

Chris Chin is graduating from West Kildonan Collegiate in June 2019. He plans to attend the University of Manitoba Asper School of Business in pursuit of bachelor of commerce degree. Following his studies, Chris hopes to pursue a lifelong dream of entering the sports management field.

In his spare time Chris plays soccer with the West Kildonan Cougars and will spend his summer perfecting his game for the playoffs. He also plans to visit family in British Columbia over the summer holiday.

Chris will always value his time in the page program. The Legislative Assembly has given him a first-hand look at the value and power of democracy, has reaffirmed his interest in politics and has introduced him to many great people. Chris will use what he has learned as a page in his future studies as well as his everyday life.

And on behalf of all members here, we wish both of you the very best in your future endeavours.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Concordia Hospital ER Closure Public Information Campaign

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Madam Speaker, I'd certainly like to wish Chris and Marianne best of all that's coming up for you in your own lives and to thank you for all that you've done for us in this Chamber.

* (13:50)

I'd also like to take a minute to wish the Raptors good luck in game 1 tonight as they represent for Canada. We The North, Madam Speaker. We've, of course, been looking forward to this game since we first found that they'd make the finals five days ago.

Five days was, of course, the same amount of time that this minister saw fit to warn the people of northeast Winnipeg that they are going to lose the emergency room at the Concordia Hospital.

I'll table this document from WRHA CEO Réal Cloutier, who says that they are going to launch a public advertising campaign sometime soon to let the people of northeast Winnipeg know when the hospital is going to close.

When is this advertising campaign going to start? Sunday night?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, for a moment there I had sensed what I thought was a new atmosphere of co-operation, but then it quickly dissipated.

Madam Speaker, to the member's question, let me be clear that the recommendation of Dr. Peachey in this review was to move quickly to undertake the transition—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —to urgent care. We're very proud to be providing that level of service to the northeast quadrant of Winnipeg. We know that it is a very robust provision of health care. As a matter of fact, yesterday—[interjection] The member for Minto (Mr. Swan) might want to hear this answer in his dying days in this Chamber.

Madam Speaker, yesterday, site leaders at Concordia said that 70 per cent of all patients now presenting at Concordia could continue to do so and not even—and have a seamless experience.

Madam Speaker: Maybe before we go on further I'm going to take a moment to remind everybody we have a lot of students here in the gallery today, and I think you know my sensitivities around our behaviour here when we have kids that are here to learn.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, I can't believe the Minister of Health would just stand up here and say he's proud to close an emergency room in Winnipeg, and I can't believe that he'd say that and then later on in the same answer go on to say that 30 per cent of the patients at Concordia are too sick to be treated there starting Monday when there won't be an emergency room. And the situation will get even worse later on in June once they also close the intensive care unit.

But further to the document that I tabled that shows that they have not yet begun an advertising campaign to warn the people of northeast Winnipeg that they're losing an emergency room, I have to point out, Madam Speaker, this is just further evidence of the mismanagement and the rush job that they're bringing to our health-care system.

How is it that the Minister of Health intends to close an emergency room just four days from now, and he still doesn't have a plan to let the people of Winnipeg know what's happening?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, it's regrettable that the leader of the opposition tries to spread fear, but the facts are these and Manitobans know them: that urgent care is coming to Concordia; that the ICU stays open for the entire month of June; that the protocols around EMS transfer remain in place; that patient care and system stability will be at the centre of our thinking.

But I wonder if that member was proud in the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 to have the NDP emergency wait times at 90th percentile, the worst in Canada.

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

Mr. Kinew: Just reading through the rest of this all-staff email, and it says, yes, the ICU will still close as planned. But then, in one of the final lines, the CEO of the WRHA says: We understand that this has not been easy on any of you. So, an admission there from the management that is overseeing this government's terrible plan to close

emergency rooms in Winnipeg that this has been very difficult.

Why is it that this government is so intent on rushing forward with a plan that has been difficult for everybody involved, that will see the closure of emergency rooms in Winnipeg and does not include any plan for a public notice to warn people in northeast Winnipeg that they're about to lose an emergency room?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, to be clear, first, we have said all along that running health care is not an easy business and being involved in health care during a transition is not easy, and we thank all the front-line workers for their continued engagement at this time of transition.

But what is also not easy, Madam Speaker, is to be a patient, as Manitobans were, under an NDP system for 17 years that made them wait in emergency rooms the longest times of any Canadian from St. John's to Salt Spring Island.

That member has one message for Manitobans. His message is go back. Manitobans don't want to go back. They want to go forward to shorter wait times and a transformed health-care system that gets them better care sooner.

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

Public Health Nurses Request to Increase

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Actually, my message is to keep emergency rooms open and to hire more nurses.

We know that nurses are under pressure under this government. That's why nurses have been writing to us over and over again, warning about the health risks at hospitals like Seven Oaks, Concordia, subacute wards, St. Boniface, the neo-natal intensive care unit, and the list goes on. So many nurses upset with this government's plan. Today, we've received the latest in the series of these letters.

I'll table this letter, which was addressed to the Minister of Health. It's an urgent letter from public health nurses, Madam Speaker. They say the syphilis rates—this outbreak—is off the charts in Winnipeg. There's been over a 1,000 per cent increase since their last staffing bump up.

We've said in this Chamber many, many times that we need more nurses in Winnipeg, not less.

Will the minister stand up in the House today and commit to hiring more public health nurses?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): It's too bad that the member didn't read the entire three-page memo sent by the CEO today. Had he, he would have discovered on page 2 that the memo he tabled for us helpfully says staffing increases, including nurses, at emergency departments will remain and will be in place to accommodate increased volumes and patient acuity at sites.

It also goes on to say they've had positive and productive meetings with labour leadership and will continue to work—and it goes on to say that the goal is to provide staff that is working at Concordia with the ability to remain at urgent care.

These are all steps that are being taken to smooth out this transition, to put the patient first and we have confidence the plan will work.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, even though we've moved on to a new issue and the minister has a tough time keeping pace with us on this side of the House, I'll back things up for a second and point out that those are announcements made by management, but nurses tell us, day after day, that those positions remain empty and they are continuing to be forced to work mandatory overtime, Madam Speaker.

Now, when it comes to the shortage of public health nurses, this is directly contributing to the outbreak of STBBIs in the city of Winnipeg. The cuts this government are making are contributing to the outbreak. It says in this letter that this unit of public health nurses has not been able to complete contract—contact tracing for more than a year. That is an extremely important role for a public health nurse. It helps to slow the spread of disease in our community.

Given this alarming information, will the minister just stand up today and commit to hiring more public health nurses?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I can inform that member that I meet regularly with our acting Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, that Dr. Michael Isaac has himself said that they are undertaking additional measures to strengthen the provision of

service across the province because they are dealing—as other provinces are, and other states in the Midwest—with some troubling statistics that are going up instead of down. And so there's a plan, a co-ordinated plan to respond to that.

Now, that is a plan—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —that is the plan of the acting Chief Provincial Public Health Officer. If that member has a plan with that independent officer and chief medical officer, perhaps he should take it up with that individual.

* (14:00)

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

Mr. Kinew: Here's a difference in the choices we make, Madam Speaker. He chooses to meet with management and bureaucrats; we choose to meet with the nurses and the front-line workers.

What the nurses set out—the public health nurses dealing with this outbreak that is tied to the meth crisis, that's tied to addiction but also poses a grave public health risk for all Manitobans, what they set out at the conclusion of their letter is as follows. This is a direct quote: We cannot meet our standards of care and clinical practice guidelines in a safe manner for all. End quote. That is a remarkable statement. The public health nurses in the province of Manitoba are saying, under this government's watch they can no longer fulfill their responsibility to take care of patients safely.

There is a simple response this government should take in—act in order to respond to this dramatic outbreak in our city and across our province: it's to hire more public health nurses.

Will the Minister of Health stand up today and stop with the rhetoric and, instead, commit to hiring more public health nurses?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the challenges that Manitoba is seeing in respect of public health are challenges that are experienced in other jurisdictions right across Canada, throughout the Midwest in the US, and they're significant challenges.

And that's why, in my most recent meeting with the acting Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, he informs me that they are redoubling their efforts, using new strategies. They are bringing in additional resources, including nurses, to be able to help reach

some very marginalized and difficult-to-reach populations where the prevalent use of illicit drugs is going up and not down.

So there's a strategy in place. That member can take comfort that he has a very competent chief medical officer—or, I should say, chief provincial officer—that takes these issues seriously, and Manitobans should have comfort in that.

Concordia Hospital Request to Retain ER

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Yesterday it became clear that earlier this year senior officials from the WRHA and Shared Health became skeptical of the minister's plan to close Concordia ER. Maybe that's because the highest wait times, mandatory overtimes and staffing shortages since this minister's plan became—his plan began.

How is the public, the residents of north Winnipeg, supposed to believe this minister or have any confidence in what they're doing in health care?

Will the minister show some courage today, stand up and admit that his plan is failing, and keep Concordia ER open?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for Point Douglas for a question on the subject of courage, because the NDP did not have the courage to act in those years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

When they presided over the highest wait times for emergency departments in all of Canada, they did nothing. They threw more money at a failing system, and then they received a report by Dr. David Peachey that was entitled healing the health system and they did nothing with it.

Madam Speaker, this government has the courage to act to better transform our health-care system to put the patient first and to finally get the lower wait times that have been elusive under the NDP for years and years.

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

Mrs. Smith: On this side of the House we will continue to listen to nurses, who tell us that this minister is misrepresenting the wait times. They have continued to go on for—higher and higher under his government. The minister openly admitted that he knew about the disagreements and the skepticism

around the closure of Concordia ER, yet he decided to proceed anyway, and giving residents five days notice. Many people don't read the paper, watch question period or even watch the news. How are they supposed to know that the Concordia ER is going to close?

Will the minister get up today and, again, show some courage, admit that his plan is wrong and commit to keeping Concordia ER open?

Mr. Friesen: The member is wrong. I have this update for the—all members of the Assembly that emergency department and urgent-care wait times across the WRHA are down 5 per cent from last month.

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

Mrs. Smith: That minister can continue to misrepresent the numbers all he wants. They've gone up every year, year after year under his minister and his Premier (Mr. Pallister).

They are not listening to nurses, who are telling them that it's getting worse under their government. What do they do? They go and shut an ER, giving residents just five days notice, not even giving the nurses notice, and then they blame it on the nurses that they have a shortage. Well, they told them that they were closing it long ago so, of course, nurses have no choice but to find a job somewhere else—and out of our province, forcing nurses out of our province.

Will the minister again—I'll give him one more chance to have the courage to stand up, apologize to those—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: Well, now I'm confused, because the member says that numbers are being misrepresented, but if the month before was 2.17 hours and then this most recent month was 2.07 hours, that is a change of 5 per cent to the better.

So I don't know if it's a calculator that's needed, but it—certainly, these numbers are down.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, our government has always said that the transition will be necessary. We know that it's a challenging thing to do things differently in the health-care system, but I reflect today that the subtitle of David Peachey's original

report was called Doing Things Differently and Better.

We are committed to both, but we're committed to them because we want to get better health care sooner for all Manitobans.

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Retain ER Services

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Minister for Health can continue to try and spin the facts, but the facts are wait times have increased year after year after year under his leadership, and now, Madam Speaker, residents of north Winnipeg are going to show up at the Concordia ER on Monday only to find out that the minister took the sign down overnight.

North Winnipeggers are scared that their only ER, Seven Oaks, is going to suddenly close without notice. The disagreement and skepticism between senior officials and this minister over the closure of Concordia ER is nothing but proof his plan is failing.

Will the minister stand up today, listen to north Winnipeggers and keep Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs open? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): The member's anecdotal evidence is wrong. These are the NDP wait time numbers for 2014-2015: 2.30 hours. These are the NDP's wait times for the year 2015-16 before we came to power in April: 2.33 hours. The wait times now? Well below that at 2.17 hours. The times are coming down.

Madam Speaker, they might have their opinion—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —but their opinion does not change the facts.

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

Ms. Fontaine: No matter which way the Minister for Health attempts to spin his facts, his alternative facts, the bottom line is that wait times in Manitoba and in Winnipeg are going up year after year. It doesn't matter what this minister puts on the record here; they are alternative facts and nobody believes him.

Meanwhile, front-line workers at Seven Oaks have expressed their concerns on this government's

troubling health-care overhaul. In January ER nurses wrote to the minister, concerned and overwhelmed because of staffing shortages. His new model system is failing. His plans of closures are creating chaos.

Will the minister stand up today and keep Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs open?

Mr. Friesen: Oh, it's quite a day when the member is reflecting on the chief data analyst for the WRHA and Shared Health in the province of Manitoba—civil servants—and calling their information alternative facts; so that is bizarre, Madam Speaker, but we're used to the bizarre pronouncements of that individual in the Legislature.

* (14:10)

Nevertheless, Madam Speaker, Manitobans do not want to go back to the same failed attempts of the NDP. They threw more money at the system, it didn't work, and they did it year after year.

This transformation of the health-care system is designed to put the patient first to get to a—efficient and streamlined system that gets better results. We believe those better results are finally within reach for Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Let's not forget about a critical point in the subacute nurses' letter from the other day, directed to the minister, and I quote: Seven Oaks General Hospital has been running at overcapacity for the past few months. End quote.

Where does the minister expect all of these people to go when he shuts the Seven Oaks ER? To St. Boniface, to HSC, to the Grace Hospital, which are already increasing longest wait times in the last two years and mounds of mandatory overtime for nurses? Nurses are already stretched thin. When Manitobans need care, time is of the essence.

Will the minister stand up today and finally just announce that he is going to reverse his plan to cut or to close Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, asked and answered. That member knows that as soon as those nurses at Seven Oaks hospital had written that letter, I immediately instructed the system leaders to meet with them. That meeting took place. The chief operating officer, the chief nursing officer met with those nurses to hear their concerns.

While they continue to chirp and won't listen to the answer, I can tell you that they were all very positive about that meeting. What nurses want, I would believe, is to have a safe space for their patients and a safe space for them to work, and we are all aligned to those same goals.

We thank them for their service. We thank them for their engagement. We all applaud nurses and the efforts they make every single day, and we believe that for the first time with these changes a real supportable and a stable system for health care is within reach for Manitoba.

Lead Contamination and Air Quality Testing Report Results for St. Boniface

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): For years the residents of south St. Boniface have been expressing concern that new heavy industrial activities nearby may be the source of metal pollution in their yards and neighbourhoods.

Last summer, of course, this government failed to inform residents about test results showing lead contamination, and when they did, they justified their inaction as usual by saying the NDP was even worse.

I would like to table a recent letter from the residents' association saying they—in April they received letters for the results of an August 2017 soil sample that had been held for nearly two years. They write that, quote, one of the residential results shows lead levels that exceed the Canadian council of ministers of environment guideline safety limits for residential properties by almost 12 times. They write that many residents are left wondering when there'll be any action or plans for remediation.

This government keeps saying they're putting money into cleanup.

Is any available for St. Boniface or other neighbourhoods with lead contamination?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Once again I stand to correct the member for St. Boniface on some of the misinformation in his preamble, and also he, at one point, had accused this government for a cover-up that was orchestrated by the NDP governments of Greg Selinger and of Howard Pawley.

So I would just like to correct the member that in 1988 it was Howard Pawley under the NDP that covered up the first lead-in-soil report and that it was

under the NDP throughout the 17 years that they were—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: —in government that they covered up the lead-in-soil reports.

I have met with the residents of south St. Boniface. I have ordered additional testing and I have released all those tests to them.

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

Mr. Lamont: Those lead tests actually came out about six months before—six weeks before the 1980 election when the first PC Filmon government was elected. They were responsible.

So when asked about this issue in the House, the minister said that, quote: We are also getting additional equipment that will be arriving this week. I am told by the department that will—they will do additional air quality testing because we do know that fine particulate is of a great concern. We want to make sure that we've got our finger on the pulse, and if there are excessive levels at any time that our department can quickly react and take those steps. End quote. That was October 26, 2017.

We now know the department sat on the results and it's 18 months later.

Were the air monitors ever set up and have they shown what the source of the air pollution is?

Ms. Squires: Well, again, Madam Speaker, I'm happy to correct the member's misinformation. Not only did our government order additional tests for lead in soil in his community, among many other communities, we released that information.

We also did order additional equipment. We've got additional air quality monitoring stations set up in south St. Boniface. We also have a mobile unit.

Under the NDP all this equipment was reduced. The budget was slashed incredibly under the NDP government. We've enhanced the resources that the department has at their disposal to do that additional air quality monitoring.

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

Mr. Lamont: I know this government likes to emphasize how the NDP sat on studies of lead results, but these tests date back 31 years of

continual NDP and PC governments where governments did studies, knew the results, then buried them and did nothing to address the issue.

The residents of St. Boniface asked a simple question in the letter that I tabled, which I will repeat, quote: When will the province release the complete soil testing results report, including results from the first and second phase from St. Boniface and other parts of the city so as to avoid a repeat of the 2007-2008 Winnipeg lead and soil study?

Ms. Squires: I was very pleased to work with our Minister of Health to issue out some—an RFP to get more expert advice on how to deal with some of the issues that are lingering from the time when the NDP government had failed to address lead in soil.

We've also released all that information about the lead-in-soil reports that we have taken, and I will table, for the member's purview, some of the lead-in-soil reports that were hid by the NDP. That includes lead-in-soil reports for Wolseley, Minto, Point Douglas and Tyndall Park.

Rent Assist Program Benefit Changes Impact on Low-Income Manitobans

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): The Pallister government's cuts to Rent Assist have made life harder for low-income Manitobans. Since 2017 parents with children have seen a \$2,000 cut to the benefit, and over the last three years thousands of families have lost their eligibility due to this government's changes. Families are forced to make impossible choices between food and rent.

Madam Speaker, why does this minister continue to make life harder for low-income Manitobans?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): The member opposite is just factually incorrect, Madam Speaker. In fact, we are offering more supports in the way of Rent Assist for those Manitobans who need it.

We will continue to work with those in community to ensure that they have the tools that they need to live productive lives in our community.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Just a few days ago the minister once again changed the criteria for receiving Rent Assist. It is the third time the program has been changed in as many years. This time the minister has

changed how much someone is entitled to receive based on their age.

For a single person under 55 the benefit has been frozen, meaning they will no longer receive 75 per cent of median market rent. It's another broken promise from the Pallister government.

Madam Speaker, why does the minister continue to make life harder for low-income Manitobans?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, speaking of making it harder for low-income Manitobans, Madam Speaker, members opposite were the ones that increased the PST on—that negatively impacted—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —primarily those low-income Manitobans.

We will—we are reducing the PST to make life more affordable for Manitobans. We will continue to ensure that we don't go back to the dark days of the NDP government where we're the child poverty capital of Canada. That's not what Manitobans want.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his ministers promised low-income Manitobans would continue to receive 75 per cent of median market rent, but once elected they changed the program eligibility and cut thousands off the program.

* (14:20)

Now they have frozen the benefit for single people under the age of 55. It's another broken promise from the Pallister government.

Madam Speaker, why have they said one thing and then done the exact opposite?

Ekosi.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm certainly proud to be part of a government that is helping our most vulnerable citizens, Madam Speaker.

I think we need to look at the child poverty capital—or the child poverty rate is down by 20 per cent—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —in one year, Madam Speaker. And, in fact, overall Manitoba's poverty rate is reduced by 7 per cent from 2015—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: –to 2017.

We are continuing to make life more affordable for Manitobans, unlike the previous government, where they were the child poverty capital of Canada. We cannot afford to go back to those days.

Support Services for Crime Victims Funding Announcement

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): The court process is often difficult for victims and survivors of crime as it can be re-traumatizing and make what is already a painful situation even more so. That is why support for victims of crime and organizations such as Candace House, who assist those victims, is so important.

This morning the Minister of Justice made an important announcement regarding our government's support for victims and survivors of crime. Can the minister please share the details of this announcement with the House?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to join the member for Seine River, along with Cliff and Wilma Derksen, at Candace House, a facility named in memory of their daughter that provides family members of homicide a safe place to rest, debrief and receive emotional support.

We were happy to announce \$100,000 for funding for Candace House, today, for this year to augment their own fundraising activities. We also announced over \$400,000 in new funding to support programs and services that assist victims of crime; \$235,000 will support community social service agencies that provide services to victims.

Madam Speaker, although we are tough on criminal activity, our government is proud to support victims of crime.

Pine Creek First Nation Sale and Rezoning of Land

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): First Nations in Treaty 2 territory formed a collective government a year ago and formally placed the Province on notice that any land transaction within that territory must be brought to their attention.

What is the Province doing to address outstanding land issues and unfinished treaty business for First nations in Treaty 2 territory, and what lands are being considered for sale and

rezoning there, and specifically in respect of Pine Creek First Nation?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I'd like to acknowledge to the member opposite that this government has, in fact, in three short years transferred well over 80,000 acres.

We look forward to continuing our work with First Nations in regards to treaty land entitlement. We have had a very respectful working relationship with them, and that will continue, not just on treaty land relations, but in mining protocol, tourism, economic development. This dialogue will continue. We have gone further in three years than the past government did in 17.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a final supplementary. Pardon me, the honourable member for Kewatinook, on a supplementary question.

Sclater-Pine Wildlife Area Status Update

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): In—the Sustainable Development's recent annual report, on page 73 highlights initiatives that the department is committed to. This is an excerpt: West Region wildlife staff continue to work for the potential creation of a new wildlife management area named Sclater-Pine for protecting critical moose wintering habitat. The concern is the area will be impacted by Bipole III projects, and their other concern is the use and ownership in this area because it encompasses and impacts Treaty 2 territory.

What is the status on the creation of the Sclater-Pine wildlife management area?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Our government is really committed to the initiatives of protected spaces so that we can move forward in protecting more of our habitat in the province of Manitoba, to not only contribute to some of our national goals for protected areas but to ensure that we've got the habitat necessary for wildlife, fish habitat and many species native to the province of Manitoba.

However, we do this in conjunction and in consultation with our First Nations, unlike the members opposite who, in a Throne Speech in 2015, announced the creation of a polar bear provincial park and caught all the chiefs and councils off guard with that announcement.

We do not take that approach. Our government respects our relations with our indigenous partners as we move forward on protected spaces.

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

Indigenous Community Emphasis in Legislation

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): As most are aware, I have submitted my nomination package to run as the federal Liberal candidate for my riding, Churchill–Kewatinook Aski; and while I have not won the nomination yet, *[interjection]* this is my last opportunity to speak in the House, so please be quiet.

I'd like to thank the people of Kewatinook for honouring me by giving me this opportunity to be their voice here in this building. They have my back and I have theirs. I know I will be fine in wherever my path leads me, because I am Anishinew.

I'd like to thank everyone here in this gallery for their dedication and commitment, to my federal Liberal colleagues and to the staff and especially the pages that have come and gone. I humbly request that everyone here keep my people in their thoughts when enacting legislation that affects our lives.

Go, Raptors, go.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): On behalf of our government, we would like to wish you best of luck in your federal nomination and going forward, and you can be well assured we have in the past three years always kept the First Nations' interests as a top priority.

We have a very large agenda going forward that—where indigenous partners will be walking beside us. We will not be going ahead or behind. We are working together in strong partnerships not only with the indigenous people of Manitoba, but all partners. We look forward to some very good outcomes in the coming future.

African Swine Fever Threat to Farm Animals

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, in 2017 Manitoba went through a very concerning outbreak of porcine epidemic diarrhea, or PED virus, and now African swine fever is a growing threat.

What steps is the minister taking to address this significant threat to animals in our farms?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Well, I thank the member for the question.

And, of course, PED is a very serious disease, although it's not—affect human consumption of pork in any way. But, certainly, we have other challenges as well that—and that's the African swine fever.

I know that all members of this House want to ensure that biosecurity will be at the front of the line when it comes to ensuring that biosecurity be the most important thing we can do in order to ensure our pork business is here for today and also for the future.

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

Mr. Marcelino: Though PED was contained in 2017, outbreaks have not dropped to the levels they were before. African swine fever is a growing threat.

What steps is the minister taking to address this significant threat?

Mr. Eichler: Well, I thank the member for the question.

Madam Speaker, we have been working very hard with the Manitoba pork producers, the national hog producers, as well, in order to ensure we eradicate this disease once and for all.

But certainly this disease was not started in Manitoba, but certainly our producers have learned from long and hard issues in regards to the biosecurity, in order to make sure PED never comes back, but it's going to take time, Madam Speaker, and our government has worked with the pork producers to ensure not only now but in the future that we try to eradicate the disease and keep it out.

* (14:30)

In regards to the African swine fever, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the border and the issues in regards to that. We're looking at more of a regional way to handle this disease and we'll continue to work with our pork producers.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Daylight Saving Time

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background for this petition is as follows:

(1) The loss of sleep associated with the beginning of daylight saving time has serious consequences for physical and mental health and has been linked to increases in traffic accidents and workplace injuries.

(2) According to a Manitoba Public Insurance news release, collision data collected in 2014 showed that there was a 20 per cent increase in collisions on Manitoba roadways following the spring daylight savings time change when compared to all other Mondays in 2014.

(3) Daylight saving time is associated with a decrease in productivity the day after the clocks are turned forward with no corresponding increase in productivity when the clocks are turned back.

(4) There is no conclusive evidence that daylight savings time is effective in reducing energy consumption.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to amend The Official Time Act to abolish daylight savings time in Manitoba effective November 4, 2019, resulting in Manitoba remaining on Central Standard Time throughout the year and in perpetuity.

And this petition has been signed by Glen Friesen, Pauline Friesen, Colin Hildebrand and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Early Learning and Child-Care Programs

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by Catherine Buckboro Shuhong Wong [*phonetic*], Serola [*phonetic*] Eke and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase;

quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated, and

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And this petition was signed by Chelsie Andrusiek, Jeff Williment, David Globerman and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit

child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

* (14:40)

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by many Manitobans. Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lamoureux:—quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and their families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Undasia *[phonetic]* Biberdorf, Dale Niemi and Michael Sagriff and many other Manitobans.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase;

quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance

of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

* (14:50)

This petition was signed by Keri-Al Cress, Karen Taylor, Maia Graham-Derham and many, many more.

Thank you.

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

The background to the petition is as follows—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: (1) Early learning and child-care programs in Manitoba require increased funding to stabilize and support a system that is in jeopardy.

(2) Licensed, not-for-profit early learning and child-care programs have received no new operating funding in over three years, while the cost of living has continued to increase annually.

(3) High-quality licensed child care has a lasting, positive impact on children's development, is a fundamental need for Manitoba families and contributes to a strong economy.

(4) The financial viability of these programs is in jeopardy if they cannot meet the fiscal responsibility of achieving a balanced budget, as all operating expenses continue to increase.

(5) The workforce shortage of trained early childhood educators has continued to increase; quality child care is dependent on a workforce that is skilled and adequately remunerated.

(6) Accessible, affordable and quality early learning and child-care programs must be available to all children and families in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase funding for licensed, not-for-profit child-care programs in recognition of the importance of early learning and child care in Manitoba, which will also improve quality and stability in the workforce.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by Dawn Collie, Debby Janick, Wanda Prychitko and many other Manitobans.

Concordia Hospital Emergency Room

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government has announced that Concordia Hospital's emergency room will be closed by summer of 2019.

(2) In addition to the closure of the Concordia ER, Seven Oaks General Hospital's ER will also be closed in the fall of 2019, leaving families in north Winnipeg without any point of contact with front-line health-care services.

(3) These closures will result in patients needing to travel 20 minutes or more to emergency rooms at St. Boniface Hospital or Health Sciences Centre to receive care.

(4) In recent years, a nearby QuickCare clinic was closed and plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes were cancelled.

(5) The forthcoming closure of the Concordia ER, in addition to the cuts in health care that have already been made, will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in north Winnipeg and visit the emergency room frequently, particularly those who are unable to drive or are low-income.

(6) The chaos from the provincial government's health-care overhaul is resulting in a nursing shortage, with staff vacancy rate at Concordia being 40 per cent. Nurses have expressed concern for their patients because of the shortage, is increasing overtime hours and thereby creating an environment in which quality patient care cannot be guaranteed.

(7) The provincial government failed to consult with families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg regarding the closure of their emergency room or to consult with health-care officials and health-care workers at Concordia to discuss how this closure would impact patient care in advance of the announcement.

(8) Access to emergency medical care on a 24-7 basis is essential for people living in northeast Winnipeg.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Concordia Hospital's emergency

room so that families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health-care services.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

ACCESS Bursary Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) All Manitobans deserve the opportunity to pursue a post-to pursue a university or college degree.

(2) The ACCESS program was introduced by provincial government in the 1970s. It provided grants to Manitobans who were historically under-represented in professions such as teaching and social work.

(3) Under the ACCESS program, northern, indigenous and low-income students were prioritized with significant and targeted assistance up to 60 per cent of a student's needs, including living expenses, to counter the effects of historic and systemic barriers to education.

(4) In 2018, the provincial government cancelled the ACCESS Bursary Program as it existed and the ACCESS students will now have to rely much more heavily on student loans.

(5) This situation presents a barrier for many under-represented students who may choose not to pursue an education due to debt concerns. This change is especially unfair to students who are already in the midst of completing multi-year degrees and did their financial planning anticipating a long-term commitment from the program.

(6) The provincial government has already made it harder for all Manitoba students to afford post-secondary education. It cut the tuition tax rebate, cut funding to post-secondary institutions and lifted the cap on tuition fee increases, leading to the highest tuition free-fee increase in the country.

(7) The provincial government's cuts are making school a debt sentence and placing more barriers to education in the way of disadvantaged Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately restore the ACCESS Bursary Program to

ensure targeted funded for northern, indigenous and low-income students to help reduce barriers to access and ensure all Manitobans have equal opportunities to pursue post-secondary education.

This is signed by Sara Williams, Rhoda Wolfe, Christy Levandin [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Would you please call for concurrence and third reading Bill 31, the tobacco amendment act; Bill 24, the minor amendments and corrections—and then for second reading, Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, and then Interim Supply 2019(2).

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 31, to be followed by debate on second reading of Bill 24, to be followed by Interim Supply.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 31—The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call concurrence and third reading of Bill 31, The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 31, The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and now be read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: My comments will be very short on this. I truly think this is important. It's always important. When you can have all members of the Legislative Assembly support a legislation, you probably have done things right. We're glad that we were able to listen to stakeholder groups, in terms of the Canadian Cancer Society and other organizations that were—be part of it.

We think that it makes a lot of sense. We're extremely happy we were able to reduce the PST, but we also want to make sure that the price of tobacco isn't going down. We think this is an important step

forward, and we're committed to spending the money in health care-related items.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (15:00)

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): No suspense—our NDP caucus, which had called for this very thing, agrees to Bill 31 and we will be agreeing to have it passed this afternoon, and I think that will be a good thing for Manitobans.

Why is this important? Well, it's important because I would hope that every member of this House wants to lower the rate of smoking, both to encourage people who are currently smoking to give up the habit, and perhaps of all, to stop young people from taking up the habit.

We know from the various organizations that have called for this bill, that have been quite prepared to spend time educating members of this Legislature exactly how serious the impacts of smoking are. And one of the numbers that really jumped out is the fact there's 88,000 Manitobans who suffer from COPD.

And, Madam Speaker, in my own family, of course, I had to watch my father pass away from COPD thanks to a lifetime of cigarette smoking and also some of the industrial causes, as he worked at Trans-Canada Airlines and then at Air Canada.

Madam Speaker, you and I and—I wish other members of this House didn't know just what a terrible disease it is, as people's breathing becomes more and more difficult, as they're less able to get enough oxygen—first of all, to be active, second of all, even to be able to walk or be able to have a normal life in their own homes, many times having to have oxygen and eventually really being unable to have any quality of life at all.

I wish that governments had moved ahead 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago—it'd be 60 years ago when my dad would've started smoking—to taken on tobacco companies, to have done more, to have made Manitobans, Canadians and people around the world more aware of the dangers of tobacco. That didn't happen, and all we can do is to try and turn the page and move forward.

We know that over the decades, in fact, for more than a century, tobacco companies have invested a lot of money and a lot of time and a lot of effort in trying to prevent governments from moving ahead to make smoking less attractive and more expensive.

We know that cigarette companies over the years have spent a lot of effort trying to muddy the waters by using junk science, by paying doctors, by paying others to come forward to try to suggest that the overwhelming consensus of the risks and the dangers of cigarette smoking was somehow balanced by others saying that there was really no concern at all. And we know—at least I hope everybody now appreciates the dangers, and that really is what this bill is all about.

So we know that without this bill, as of July 1st, cigarettes would become just a little bit cheaper in Manitoba. And the organizations that have been very active—and I want to put on the record who they are: the Lung Association; the Canadian Cancer Society; MANTRA, which is the Manitoba Tobacco Reduction Alliance, Inc. and the Heart and Stroke Foundation—wrote to all members of the Legislature asking, effectively, for what is, in large measure, contained in Bill 31.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It's not exact, but for the purposes of getting something done, we're not going to quibble with the bill that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) has put before this House, which has cleared committee with unanimous consent and which we now believe is going to pass this afternoon with unanimous consent.

It is an opportunity, though, to talk a little bit more about what has to be done to keep up the fight, to continue to dissuade Manitobans from taking up a dangerous habit, one which has major health impacts for smokers, for everybody around them, and major impacts on employers, on the provincial treasury because of the health-care costs and, really, all of our communities.

And, of course, tomorrow—you might not have known it because the government didn't mark it any particular way—is World No Tobacco Day. And, in advance of that day, these organizations put out a report card just yesterday about government's efforts—continuing efforts to try and reduce cigarette smoking, and this Progressive Conservative government did not fare very well.

They got a C, which I suppose the Minister of Health would somehow spin as being a great success. They got an A for listening to these organizations and for listening to us and bringing in Bill 31; that's a good thing, but this government actually received Ds when it comes to the efforts that they've been making

to stop people from taking up smoking, and their lack of support for those who are smoking.

And none of this, I don't presume, is going to come as a surprise to members of the government who had had the opportunity to hear from these same organizations, who've been asked some very pointed questions by these organizations about this government's sincerity in dealing with smoking, and it's the exact sort of things, frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we would have asked if this government had ever chosen, on more than one occasion, to call Estimates.

It would have been a great opportunity to ask the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance why this government is so disinterested—against their own interests, may I add—in assisting Manitobans to stop smoking and to not start smoking in the first place.

And, of course, this remains a significant problem. We know that the rate of smoking declined greatly over our government's time in office. Manitoba had a higher smoking rate than other provinces. Manitoba still has a relatively high smoking rate. What is really chilling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that these great organizations that are out there every day trying to convince fewer Manitobans to smoke tell us that the success in having fewer young Manitobans smoking seems to have stalled over the last couple of years.

And, in fact, the latest evidence they have suggests that not only has the decline in smoking among young people—not only has that decline stopped, it now appears there may actually be a larger percentage of young people smoking than there were even two or three years before, and that's a concern.

We know that about one in six Manitobans continue to smoke. The smoking rate, although it's gone down, still stands at between 15 and 16 per cent. What that means is there are 214,000 Manitobans who continue to smoke. The goal of these organizations is to get that down from 15 or 16 per cent down to 5 per cent by 2035. It's a noble goal; it's one that I hope they're able to achieve, but these organizations cannot do it alone.

I hope that every member of this House is aware just how serious tobacco addiction is. We know that in Manitoba there is some \$337 million in direct and indirect health-care costs. That's of—that's as of 2012. We know that in Manitoba each year there's some 1,680 deaths that are attributed to tobacco use. We

know that there's almost 22,000 potential years of human life lost due to premature death and, again, a chilling statistic is that as of 2017 8,300 children from grades 7 to 12 reported having smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Tobacco's health effects—now, again after decades and decades of obfuscation and, frankly, outright lies by big tobacco—tobacco's health effects, I think, are now not disputed. Most smokers die about 10 years earlier than someone who's never smoked—10 years of life lost by people who become addicted to smoking cigarettes.

Those people are three times more likely to have a stroke or die of heart disease. They're at increased risk of 16 different kinds of cancer. Tobacco's responsible for 30 per cent of all cancer deaths and for 85 per cent of all lung cancer cases.

What is also very, very chilling is information that was presented to our caucus just recently by these tremendous organizations talking about the risks of someone trying tobacco even once, and they put forward some information presented by the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, and they found in their study—they wanted to find with a number of different addictive substances, what is the—what they call the communal of probability estimate of transition from first use to dependence.

* (15:10)

In other words, if you try it, what are the likelihoods—what is the likelihood that you're actually going to become addicted to it. Well, this survey—and I don't know how broad the survey was. I presume it was across Canada and had a large sample size.

They found that 8.9 per cent of people who tried cannabis wound up becoming dependent; 20.9 per cent of people who tried cocaine wound up being dependent; 22.7 per cent of people who tried alcohol wound up becoming dependent; but above all, in a shocking statistic, 67.5 per cent who tried nicotine—which is, of course, delivered by cigarettes and now by a wide range of other ways—67.5 per cent who tried it have now become dependent.

And that is absolutely shocking. I know that we spend a lot of time—with good reason—being concerned about the effects of alcohol; the effects of cannabis, now that it's been legalized; the effect of illegal drugs; but nicotine actually is three times

more likely to create a dependence than any of these other substances.

I say that this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the importance—the absolute importance of the government truly investing in programs to stop young people from smoking, and, indeed, to stop young people from even trying smoking once.

And that comes back to the fact that this bill will raise more revenue for the Province of Manitoba. And again, because we want this bill to pass, we're not going to quibble.

The minister's staff tell us this should raise about \$3 million in revenue. The organizations that proposed measures suggest that number should probably be closer to five or \$5.5 million. We're not going to argue about that.

What we do believe is that the additional money that's received from this should be used to make every reasonable effort to stop Manitobans from becoming addicted to nicotine, addicted to cigarettes and other smoking materials. And, of course, there are some deep concerns about how this government has actually done so far. And I was surprised by what the organizations had told us.

This will not come as a surprise to the Minister of Health or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), I don't believe, but what they said was that they had tried to look into this government's investments in smoking prevention, smoking cessation, and were shocked to find that the great majority of the tobacco control budget for this government simply never got spent last year, and they have no confidence that it's going to be spent this year either.

At least on the books, this Province claims that it is allocating \$3.2 million a year for tobacco control. That's a little less than \$3 for every Manitoban. We understand that two thirds of this budget wasn't even spent last year.

If we had ever had a chance to get to departmental Estimates, this would have been one of the things that I know my colleague, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and perhaps other members of our caucus, I would expect the Liberal Party and perhaps the independent members, would have asked.

We understand that there's a number of contracts with organizations that work on smoking cessation, smoking prevention. Those contracts have not been renewed. There is some suspicion that this money

has been diverted to deal with cannabis. We don't have any problem at all with this government taking cannabis seriously, but not at the expense of trying to prevent people from using tobacco.

And there's been no answer from this government, and their lack of action has been reflected in the poor grade they received. Again, A for this bill, you know, you're welcome, but Ds when it comes to actually stopping Manitobans from taking up a very dangerous habit.

And, you know, those who know this best have a lot of recommendations for governments. And this bill will not do everything along that front, but it is going to provide funding, which will give this government some room. We know that the additional revenue wasn't built into their budget.

This is going to be—and I don't know what kind of windfall, because all it is is keeping the tobacco tax effective the same as it was. Not a windfall but certainly an opportunity for this government.

And rather than use the money to backfill more of their cuts, we will be looking, we'll be asking, we'll be demanding that this government come forward with its plan of how it's going to spend the additional revenue that it's going to get when this bill passes, which, again, we support.

You know, there's actually a number of policy recommendations that these organizations that have been so strong put forward, and I know they want to engage with government and have some future discussions on exactly how tobacco should be priced.

And it was one of the unfortunate byproducts, if you will, of how this government does business, that when the issue was first raised by these organizations—and, of course, it was ignored by the government—when the issue was raised in the Legislature when I asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) questions in question period, the initial response—less so from the Minister of Finance, more so from the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—was to say, well, we don't want more taxes; it's all your fault; you put more taxes on cigarettes; that caused more people to smoke—which just flies completely in the face of the evidence.

It flies in the face of the smoking numbers that are published, it flies in the face of what these organizations asked us to do as a government and what they've given us credit for doing as a government, which resulted in some 30,000 fewer Manitobans speaking—or, smoking, rather.

So we know that there's much more that needs to be done. We know that more respect needs to be given to these organizations. At the committee meeting, I did suggest to the presenter who came down and spoke to us that, I guess, it's apparent that, if the anti-smoking groups want to get things done, simply meeting with the Minister of Health and meeting with the Minister of Finance is not enough. They should make very public what they want to do. They should let all members of this House know because then, and I think only then, can we actually press the government, and, in this case, have legislation that we can stand behind. And I think that's a very positive thing.

So we are going to be prepared to have this bill passed this afternoon. I want the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health to know that we are going to be watching very carefully to see what they do with the money. We will expect to have announcements—well, who knows when they'll be able to announce things if they insist on an illegal election. Whether it's before or after the election, we'll expect to hear good things being done with this money.

And, frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll celebrate that, and we'll give credit to the government if they're going to use the money for a good cause.

And I can't think of any better cause than encouraging Manitobans to stop smoking and, above all, encouraging young people never ever to take up the habit in the first place.

So I want to thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity this afternoon to put some comments on the record about Bill 31. And, again, I do look forward to this passing third reading this afternoon.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). Oh, sorry, was the honourable member for Burrows standing up? Okay, sorry about that.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'll keep my remarks very short.

The Liberal Party of Manitoba is going to be supporting Bill 31, The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, and anything that we can be doing to be further educating Manitobans, we are on board with.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I did want to comment on this bill and actually congratulate the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) for a very good speech on this particular measure that the government is taking. And, at the outset, I want to say that I think we're probably just a few days away before an election call. The anticipation is next Tuesday will probably be the call, and I know the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is eyeing those—all those hospital signs that he's collecting.

But the reality is that, you know, none of us are—can be absolutely sure that we're going to be successful in an election. I mean, we've been—I mean, I keep running and keep getting elected, but there's always a possibility that one of these days you're going to run and you're not going to get elected.

* (15:20)

So I did want to say that I'm—I've been—had a great time here the last three years with all of the members that are here, very impressed with all the new members. Have to say I think a big improvement over some of the other caucuses that I've had to deal with over the last 30 years, and I did look at some of the pictures of previous legislatures in my office in the last few hours and I did see—I didn't recognize anybody that was there that's here now until I got to 1999, so I got here in '86 and there's nobody here from '86, '88, 1990, '95, and finally I found 1999—there was the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), much-younger-looking member for River Heights at that time, and no one, as I said, from 1995.

So, while we've—we haven't got—the member for Steinbach wants to talk about 1997—we haven't got that far yet. So, anyway, the fact of the matter is that, you know, I know that some of us will not be here after the next election, and it's been a pleasure working with all of you.

Now, regarding the bill, the member mentioned that, you know, if the governments had moved earlier to tax tobacco products earlier than they did, then probably we would have been able to reduce the carnage of tobacco in terms of premature deaths, and he's absolutely right in making that observation.

But, however, you have to recognize the times. In those days in the 19—presumably '40s, 1950s—at that time, my guess is that of the 57 members in the Legislature, probably a high percentage of them, probably the same percentage as members of the public were actual smokers. There were smokers

when I got here on both sides of the House and there were quite a number of them.

I remember the member for Lakeside—and, by the way there's only been, I think, three members for Lakeside in the last 100 years—but Harry Enns, who was there, I think, 37 years or quite a number—yes, 37, I think it was—but Harry used to be smoking right behind the curtains—well, they're not here anymore, but there used to be curtains here and we'd see some smoke coming up from underneath the curtains and that was Harry, who was smoking right here in the building. And until very recently, I think, there's been even MLAs smoking in their offices, which is totally, you know, disallowed.

So it's been a progression over the times, and MLAs were smokers in those days. Even doctors were smokers in those days. It was accepted in the public. When you went out to a legion or a bar, there was smoking there. There was—people were smoking in trains; people were smoking on airplanes.

And, you know, they had a non-smoking section on the trains and on the planes, as if anybody could believe that you could take a train car and have one section for smokers and some for not.

And so you've got children of all ages sitting there, breathing in all this second-hand smoke that I would suggest to you that probably most of the kids—well, they're now our age, probably had more second-hand smoke than some full-time smokers because there'd be smoke in people's houses and pretty well everywhere you turn.

And there was promotion in those days on television ads. I mean, the—you know, members probably remember John Wayne, who was a star of many of the western movies of the day, you know, was a promoter of Marlboro Man, who eventually died of lung cancer, I believe.

I had an aunt, actually, who took up smoking when she got married. She just felt she should have a—some kind of habit—and who would do that, right, start—get through your whole life until you're age, like, 23, 24, 25, and then decide that you should take up smoking because it was, at that time, a fashionable thing to do.

So, at a certain point, the public made the connection with the effects of smoking—the negative effects of smoking and the death rates associated with lung cancer and all of the other diseases that—caused by smoking. And governments started to do something about raising the taxes and trying to

promote people from stopping smoking. And about that time, there were legal challenges to cigarette sellers, and those legal challenges have resulted in the billions of dollars in settlement.

But, you know, you would think that with all that scientific knowledge out there and medical knowledge that the cigarette companies would become responsible and simply cease and desist and not produce the product anymore.

But that's not what's happening. My understanding is that these companies are actually developing new markets. They're developing new markets in poorer countries around the world, and even in our own country here it's a fact that in poorer people, oftentimes, tend to be—have more smokers.

So, clearly, this is not a—we may be making progress here in Canada with our 30 million people in terms of convincing people to stop smoking and reducing the effects of smoking in this province in this country.

But while we're doing that, the very people that've caused the problem in the first place, the cigarette manufacturers, are allowed to go out and promote their products in other countries of the world. I think that that is not particularly a good idea and something that should not be supported.

So, I mean, the reality is that price has been a deterrent. I know that, certainly, when—back in—when I was a teenager and so on, price was a big issue. And so the price went up in cigarettes, there would be an inclination to spend less on those. So we have followed that approach, and that is something that has proven to be effective.

So we are pretty fairly happy that the government has seen the light on this bill. Why they—took them so long to figure it out, I'm not really sure. Evidently, even the federal government—the federal Conservative government, when the GST was changed, that they, in fact, did raise the price. When the GST was lowered, they did raise the price of cigarettes at the time, knowing that raising the price of cigarettes would provide a deterrent.

So—and also remember—people will remember that—well, I do remember back around 1980, there was a former MLA in our caucus by the name of Don Scott, but this was after he won his nomination but before he became an MLA. There was a quite a novel—he had novel approach in a lot of different ways, but he invited a bunch of us over to his house for a party one Friday, Saturday night.

And so we went over there, and in those days, pretty much of all of us were smokers or marginal smokers. And we were just shocked that he refused to let us in the house if we were smoking. We were told, no, you have to go outside. And we thought, what kind of a strange party is this? You know, we'll never come back to another—if he invites us again, we'll never come back to his party. And that's how shocked we were. Like, we just couldn't believe this.

Now, today, it would be the exact opposite of that; that if you even had a party at your house and somebody lights up a cigarette, you'd probably be the first one to kick him or her out of the house. And even the homeowners themselves, you know, walk out of their very own houses and sit out—smoke outside when it's like 30, 40 below in the wintertime.

And, you know, from a real estate agent's point of view, there was a change there, too, because there was a time, I guess, when, you know, real—houses just changed hands. You put a for-sale sign as an agent and you sold the house and that was it. But it changed in the—sometime in the 1980s to where if you're—had a smoking house, you couldn't sell it. You know, if you were—if there were smokers, you'd take buyers around and they wouldn't go anywhere near that house.

The same is true of cars. Like, you know, people would smoke in their cars, and the cars would smell of smoke. Well, there came a point in time when people wouldn't buy a car that was owned by a smoker.

* (15:30)

So we have seen a sea change in just the last 30 years in this whole issue of smoking. And—but the member had mentioned that—for Minto had mentioned that it's just too bad the governments hadn't moved earlier, that they—that if they had moved in the 1920s or 30s, much earlier—and surely there was medical—there must have been medical proof in those days that smoking was bad for peoples' health and that it was going to cause a huge, huge cost to the medicare system in this country.

Surely we would, with hindsight—you know, hindsight's perfect—we should have moved much earlier than we did.

In any event, as been indicated by the—a previous speaker, I believe there's a number of more speakers that want to speak to this bill. We're in support of the bill and we're planning to pass it today.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It certainly is my honour to rise in the House this afternoon and put just a few words on the record with regards to Bill 31.

Before I begin my remarks, I just wanted to take a moment to acknowledge—even though he may not hear me at this particular moment—the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who not just today did a great job in putting some words on the record with regards to this particular bill, but who I've known now for a few years that I've been in the Chamber here and seen the work that he's done firsthand.

And I think all members of the Chamber would agree that he is certainly an exemplary example of a legislator and, as a representative of his community, he's always been a strong champion of that community and certainly makes sure that we all always know that he is West End proud, and just on a personal level is somebody that I have a lot of respect for and have learned a lot from.

So, if this is my opportunity in this Chamber to rise and just put a few words on the record with regards to his career and to give—have the opportunity to wish him the best, then I will take that opportunity and offer those few words to congratulate him.

With regards to his particular words on Bill 31, though, I also appreciate the fact that, as I've said in the past, he's—I think some of the best speeches that we've heard in this place and some of the best legislation and debate that's happened because of the speeches, has been when members bring a personal experience to the House. And so I just want to also put on the record that I appreciated the member for Minto's words with regards to his own father, and, well, timing is everything as they say in politics, and I may have missed the time—we may have missed the timing there a little bit, ships in the night. But I'm sure he's going to read the Hansard and hear all about it.

But just with regards to the particular words he put on the record about Bill 31, I think it was important for him to start from a personal place and to talk about how it's impacted his particular family. And so it is an issue I know that he takes very seriously. And that's why it was so important for him to be, once again, the champion for this issue here in this Legislature.

And, you know, it's not often they—I mean, there's a lot of criticism about how question period is conducted and the value of it in terms of, you know, accomplishing things. But this is one of those examples where questions in question period, you know, I think well thought out, you know, well researched and passionate words in question period asked of a minister actually can result in something getting done.

And here we are this afternoon with, I think, all members of the Chamber in support of his legislation. And it was because of the member for Minto, who took it upon himself to once again stand up on this issue, to push the minister, to push the government and to say it's time for you to act.

Now, you know, again, you know, question period isn't maybe the best forum for that kind of debate because we wouldn't want to go back and maybe look at exactly what the minister put on the record at that point. You know, he probably could have said, you know, I appreciate the question; it sounds like the member has a solid idea and I'll take it under advisement, and thank you for raising that question. Maybe it only would have been one question, rather than three then, that the member would have asked. But of course, he didn't do that.

It took him a little bit longer to get on board. It took him a little bit of time to sit down, I think, with members of the anti-smoking community, to listen to folks at committee, to listen to individuals. Maybe he went back to his own community and listened to those individuals who have been impacted by smoking to understand that this was the right thing to do and it was something that needed to be done right away.

So, you know, I applaud the minister for doing that and for finally getting on board and for joining us in pushing for this. And I, once again, just appreciate that the minister—the member for Minto has been such a strong champion.

I also want to take a moment just to say, you know, similarly to what the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) said the other day, with regards to how the day—I guess it was maybe two days ago. Yesterday maybe wasn't a great example, but two days ago, there was an opportunity for members in the House to come together around a number of bills and to find some common interests and to support good causes and good ideas, no matter what party they came from.

Once again, I think this is an opportunity for us to do that around Bill 31. Now, I will, though, take a quick moment to just criticize, maybe, the length of time it took for the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) to call this particular bill, because we've been asking very clearly on this side of the House for the minister to call Estimates.

And he's put on the record now a few times, he's said, well, all we have to do is pass a bill in order to get Estimates called. He says, just, let's pass a bill, and then Estimates will get under way and we'll somehow accomplish the 92 hours and I think 38 minutes that we still have left in Estimates in the next couple of days of session. Maybe that's the plan of the Government House Leader.

But here it is, is a bill that I think all of us can come together and understand. We can say this is the right thing to do and support this.

As—in the same way that the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) put some words on the record from a—in a personal nature, I simply want to say that I turned 40 this year, which, I guess, is no secret.

An Honourable Member: A pup, young pup.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, well, maybe I don't feel that way every day, but I just turned 40 this year, and it was on my 30th birthday that I took the step to quit smoking. And so I was a smoker—and I was a smoker, and I'll put this on the record, but I actually, I really enjoyed it, and I smoked a lot. It was something that I was—I really—I enjoyed and I was, you know, I thought it was a good thing to do, I guess, when I was in my 20s.

And when I got to my 30th birthday, I said, this is enough. And I know I took inspiration from others that I knew that took a milestone birthday to choose that. I had quit and started a few times, but I decided on my 30th birthday that enough was enough and it was time for me to kick the habit for good.

So I just celebrated my 10th anniversary—*[interjection]*—thank you, thank you—of being tobacco-free and, to be clear, completely tobacco-free, because I—a couple of times, I—maybe I'll just have a cigar or some other way of consuming tobacco, and I said no. It's a slippery slope. It would lead me to a bad place.

Now, when I was in my 20s, leading up to my 30s, there were times when I think, well, it was an NDP government at that time that was in power, and that NDP government made it their mission to reduce

smoking rates in this province, and one of the mechanisms that they used to do that was to raise tobacco prices.

And so in my 20s, if you would have asked me in my 20s whether I appreciated that, I probably would have said, no, I don't appreciate this, but it was a factor that led to the—my decision, eventually, to say enough is enough, because the price had just gotten so high for me to buy cigarettes that it was something that, you know, was just becoming more and more difficult.

So beside the obvious health impact, because I think anyone who has smoked for a little while knows very inherently what the effects are of tobacco use.

And I know, you know, friends who continue to use tobacco or smoke in other ways, they understand it, even though they continue to do it. So you know the health part, but it's maybe—just to put you over the edge, is where some folks need that help.

* (15:40)

And sometimes, that comes from the price. And so the NDP government, as I said, when I was in my 20s, was continually raising the tobacco prices to ensure that that smoking rate came down. And, in fact, it did.

And, certainly, this isn't a phenomenon just in Manitoba, but it was, I think, you know, even more stark—the numbers. At least, when I looked at them at that time. Much more of an accelerated curve in terms of reducing that smoking rate here in Manitoba.

So there is a clear link between the rising of tobacco prices and the impact that it had on smoking. And so it was something that we could all be proud of.

And then, you know, I think that—maybe that commitment to reduce smoking rates sort of fell off in the last few years. Now, again, I—you know, I don't want to make this into a partisan issue because, you know, I do realize that it's—you know, there's several factors that contribute to this.

And one of them, I think, is very clear. And that is the resurgence—or, the emergence of vaping and e-cigarettes that has really taking—taken off. And anyone that spends any time around—in our schools or with teachers will know that this is an issue. This is a real issue. And when vaping products started coming into Manitoba, I know we had a couple of

lengthy conversations around the caucus table. And, you know, I think a few of us knew of the local establishments that were committed to, you know, smoking cessation using vaping to actually reduce nicotine intake, and how it can be a tool to do that.

And so, you know, we talked to some of the suppliers out there and the entrepreneurs who brought that industry here into Manitoba. And we sort of understood where they were coming to it from. But even then, we understood the danger. And now it's really come to play itself out and to fruition.

And that is the—you know, the big tobacco companies. The Philip Morris—I mean, they're not called Philip Morris anymore, I think they're—something sounds a lot nicer, right? Altria, 'altrua', something like that? They've changed their name so that they don't sound quite as menacing and we don't associate them, maybe, with the Marlboro Man as much anymore.

But they've latched on to this new industry and, you know, these—the kids nowadays, they're ready to start vaping, they're ready to use the JUUL product or others that really have exploded in the marketplace and brought more kids to smoking than has been the case over the last number of years.

So, again, I don't want to, you know, again, be very partisan here, because that's certainly a factor. But when given an opportunity—when the government was given an opportunity to say we want to make sure that tobacco prices continue to be increasing so that—to make that product less enticing—especially to young people, but to everybody—we really feel like they missed the ball. And they, you know, made a fairly significant misstep here.

So, as a hard-working, effective opposition, this was our opportunity to step up and to make a difference and to actually show the government the error of their ways. And here we are this afternoon, hopefully moving forward on this particular bill.

You know, as we look at passing this, though, I think there's just a couple of points that we want to make clear. And this is largely reiterating some of the points that were made by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), but I want to put them on the record, as well.

First of all, this is certainly not the end of the road. You know, there are a number of ways that the government can be effective in pushing the agenda when it comes to antitobacco, and we know that

there are partners out there that will lead us—lead the way for us. They will show us the way. They're always happy to sit down.

I know that members of our caucus sat down just recently with members of the tobacco reduction community to talk a little bit more about some of their criteria that they're looking for, some of the tools that they feel that government should be implementing. And we were certainly open to hear that message and certainly open to help them to continue to push the government.

So I just want to, I guess, put the government on notice that this is not a one-and-done sort of debate, and I think this is something that, as I said, especially as we see the impact of the large tobacco companies in the vaping space, that we—I don't think this is a debate or an endeavour that is done and that we do need to step up our efforts and find new ways to curtail and to, you know, keep smoking rates going on the downward rather than resurging and coming back up.

So that is one—certainly one point. The other point, and this really does give me a lot of pause and concern because we did have an opportunity. And I'm trying to remember in what context the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) had the opportunity to ask the minister, I believe, of Finance, maybe or—

An Honourable Member: Wasn't Estimates.

Mr. Wiebe: It definitely was not Estimates, as was pointed out. Absolutely not Estimates. But there was an opportunity to just sort of probe a little bit more closely into this and—because when the announcement was made, again, whether it was the minister of—I think it was the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) who said we are going to—we're going to take this money, we're going to increase the tax so that tobacco continues to rise in terms of the cost to consumers, but we're going to take that money and we're going to specifically channel it and focus it on reducing smoking and tobacco reduction.

This is certainly a very laudable goal, and we think this is certainly right on for what the community, the antismoking community, is asking for, and I think what Manitobans would hope that the government would focus on. The trouble becomes, of course, that when the minister was questioned a little bit more deeply, some of the answers all of a sudden didn't sound quite as concrete as we thought they might be. There was a

little bit of confusion about how that money would be tracked.

And if I remember correctly, I do believe, actually, the minister was, you know, was not—he was not very clear about some of the transparency and accountability mechanisms that would be in place to allow us to find out that information.

Now, in this current Legislature, we know—because there are no Estimates that have been called, short of just a few hours that was called one day out of this very long session since it was introduced—we haven't had the opportunity to delve more deeply into that.

And if this becomes the new normal, if this is the new pattern that this government wants to follow, it becomes very, very concerning, Mr. Speaker, because this is completely unprecedented in Manitoba's history that we would have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who's saying, I'm absolutely, definitely, one hundred per cent going to break the law this year and have an election. And, by the way, you won't get a chance to dig into our books to find out what's going on.

We ask what he's hiding. What is really going on here that he's trying to keep behind closed doors? But we will—may never know because, again, the Premier refuses to allow his House leader to call Estimates.

So this falls directly into that concern because, again, we would love to spend more time talking about this, again, now, but certainly going forward to find out more information about how the government is going to use this money to increase its efforts in reducing smoking. But, as I said, that may be something we never know.

So, you know, I could go on, Mr. Speaker, and we could certainly spend a lot of time. I know others in my—in our caucus want to put some words on the record though. So I will end my comments there.

And again, just simply to say that I think this is a goal that, you know, all members of this House, I think, certainly support and certainly appreciate. But it needs to be accomplished correctly.

And we can't see this as the—of course, as the end of this discussion, but certainly just the latest salvo in terms of issues that have arisen around tobacco use to ensure that we are consistently looking at ways to be effective in reducing smoking in this province.

The health effects alone are a massive drain on our health-care system. And we want our—we want

Manitobans to be healthy. We want them to use less health services, and we want tobacco use to go down. If we're going in the wrong direction, we need to re-examine where we're at and what we can do better.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:50)

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 31, The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act. I wish to thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) for presenting this bill in this House. Also appreciate the words of support. We have heard so far several from this side of the House and they're worth noting.

This bill is something we can readily support. It amends The Tobacco Tax Act to increase the tax rates on tobacco products.

Everyone knows the ill effects on health of tobacco products, and we can only sympathize with the smokers when the time comes that their health is severely compromised. But a greater sympathy and compassion goes to the families of smokers who will eventually bear the brunt of losing a loved one or their loved ones as a result of the bad effects of tobacco on one's health.

I am a living example of one of the victims—victim's families of the many, many people who have lost their lives as a result of smoking. I lost my father at the young age of 10, and I believe to this day his death would have been preventable had he been successful in quitting the addiction—the tobacco addiction. Even though at a young age I remember he would say, oh, I'm quitting. This habit is expensive. This habit is not good for my health.

But I think he didn't have a strong enough willpower to quit or by then, I'm pretty sure, although I'm too young to know, I think there were not enough resources in place in the community or not enough strong push from health-care providers or health-care institutions at that time, unlike what we can—what we are seeing now, not just from the government, but also from many, many community organizations such as the Canadian Cancer Society, Breathe—The Lung Association or Manitoba Tobacco Reduction Alliance Incorporated, and many more.

We all know cigarettes and tobacco products cause numerous health problems, chief among them cancer, and there are also those whose heart health is—has been compromised because of tobacco products. We have heard of so many cases of open-

heart surgery or people undergoing cancer treatment, and you could just imagine the burden on the health-care system, the cost of providing health care to these victims or to these people who have gotten ill because of tobacco products.

Whatever taxes the government have received from tobacco companies—I don't have the exact figure right now, but I've heard of an article, and there were dollar figures in that article about the cost of providing health care to citizens who are addicted with tobacco products, alongside the cost of revenue received from tobacco products. And there's a big disparity.

Knowing the effects of tobacco products on the health of Manitobans, it would be unethical not to reduce the tax on such products. Bill 31 will ultimately benefit public health, which is why we support this bill imposing a higher levy on tobacco to offset the PST reduction coming into effect this July.

From this side of the House, our party, the NDP, understands how harmful tobacco products are to the health of Manitobans, which is why, during our time in government, we made great strides to make tobacco products less accessible.

Between 2008 and 2015, the NDP government took an aggressive approach to tobacco taxation. During that time, taxes increased from 0.175 to 0.295 per cigarette. As a result, the smoking rate among young people aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 dropped by a significant 35 per cent from 2007 to 2015.

This was a steeper decline than the average throughout the country, which was a decline of 33 per cent for people aged 15 to 19 and 28 per cent for people aged 20 to 24. Because of the hard line stance that the NDP government took, 31,000 fewer Manitobans were smoking in 2015, compared to those in 2008.

A coalition of anti-smoking organizations, including—I've mentioned earlier the Canadian Cancer Society, and organizations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and also the Manitoba Tobacco Reliance-Reduction Alliance wrote every member of the Legislative Assembly asking the government to make sure that cigarettes don't get cheaper this summer.

These organizations pointed out that when the federal Conservative government reduced the GST from 7 per cent to 5 per cent, there were offsetting

tobacco taxes that ensured the price of cigarettes and other tobacco products did not decrease.

Because of the risk that tobacco use in Manitoba would begin to rise again this summer due to the reduction in the PST, the NDP took the opportunity during question period to ask this government to commit to maintaining the price of cigarettes and not allowing the PST reduction to make purchasing them cheaper.

In response to our concern for the health of Manitobans, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) evaded the question but said that it was the opinion of both opposition parties to tax people to the max. That was in the April 24th Hansard. That is very far from the truth.

Despite being asked three times to ensure the public that with the PST reduction there would be a corresponding increase in tax on tobacco so that cigarettes and other tobacco products do not become more accessible to young Manitobans.

* (16:00)

We did not receive a straight answer from this government. Keeping cigarettes out of the hands and lungs of Manitobans, especially young Manitobans, should be an easy decision to make. While we're happy that they have finally agreed not to lower the price of tobacco products, we wish it had been an easier decision for them to make.

I remember just several days ago, my colleague, the member from River Heights, shared a story that, when he was still a medical student and they were doing one of their lab studies on cadavers, he was basically taken aback to see that the difference in the lungs of—the colour of the lungs of people who were smoking, or who had smoked, from the people—the dead—the cadavers of people who did not smoke. And the smokers' lungs were definitely dark and a lot different from the colour of those who did not smoke.

So what are—what is that take off for us now here as members of the Manitoba Legislature? It should be upon us to take the necessary steps to encourage getting over the smoking addiction. Addiction is an illness.

While the people who continue to smoke do so because they have the freedom to do whatever they wish, it's their inalienable right to do what they—to do what is good—they feel good for them. And to them, smoking is good. They feel happy smoking. But for

us who know the ill effects of smoking on health, the burden that the health-care system is being subjected to because of caring for people who are unable to kick the habit or get rid of this addiction illness, it behooves upon us to come up with bills similar to The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, Bill 31, and provide more resources to those who wish to kick the habit but are—but right now would need additional help and resources.

So, with these few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm thankful for the opportunity to respond or participate in the debate on Bill 31. Thank you.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to make a few remarks on the bill and some larger reflections, as this will be my last time to speak in this place. I saw some people across the way starting to cry about that. Please don't cry. It'll be okay, it'll be okay.

Mr. Speaker, I obviously support this piece of legislation, Bill 31. Smoking is bad. We know it's bad. There was—the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) made some remarks about how times have changed, and it certainly have.

I give a different example: I—when I was UMSU president, there was a bit of a left-right dynamic. And oddly enough, I was right of centre, and we really focused on the businesses and the revenue of the student union and brought in businesses with—like Starbucks and dealt with multi-national printing companies.

And the student newspaper on the left just went wild against—how dare we not have free range coffee beans or whatever, I don't know. But it was a big deal. But, ironically, that same newspaper had no problem having full-page ads from the tobacco industry: the multi-national—a multinational, like evil corp. Like that's one thing. So things have changed.

And it's also interesting how life intersects because, at that time, the member—the opposition House leader and the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) were—I think it's safe to say that they were on the left side of the spectrum while we were there.

And—but here we are, you know, 20 years later, agreeing on a piece of legislation. And it shows that there can be common ground between parties and individuals, and we all grow as we grow older. And the member from Elmwood definitely illustrated that. I—surprised that he had photos from when he first started. I thought they did sketches or watercolours in those days, but whatever. I believe him.

He—and of course, you know, I want to, you know, thank all the members, but I—in the spirit of this bill and the fact that this Chamber is working together, I just—if I may just acknowledge a few individuals and—but I'd like to start with the people of Assiniboia, who I've had the privilege to have served for 15 years now.

I've always tried to represent the constituents. And when I was a Member of Parliament, I had great interaction with Fletcher Forums and reaching out with infrastructure initiatives, wheelchair-accessible lifts for curling clubs and twinning of the Trans-Canada, MTS Iceplex and so on; all designed to help with active living.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And the other half of that is encouraging people to make healthy choices. And by—in this very narrow circumstance, sometimes what we call syntaxes, there is a financial incentive to make a healthy choice. And that choice, of course, is not to smoke.

In fact, I don't like—I don't even like prescription—I don't like to take anything that's not natural. Like, I don't even like taking prescription drugs, and since my accident I have to take some, but I don't like any of that.

* (16:10)

But the tobacco industry is interesting in how it's developed. When I was a minister in Stephen Harper's Cabinet federally, there was the issue of the tobacco farmers in southern Ontario. There was a very large part of Ontario's economy based on tobacco, and though it had reduced over time, there was still a quota system.

So it ended up that the quotas were being accumulated by fewer and fewer individuals, but their influence was profound in the political culture—their influence on all parties. And this created a dilemma for decision makers, which I think we can learn from. On one hand, we just began, or for probably a decade or two, you know, ramping up the do not smoke, but then on the other hand, we were protecting tobacco farmers who had a legal and legitimate business. But there was a contradiction there.

Stephen Harper, to his credit, were able to end the quota system without adversely affecting the farmers, and now we don't have tobacco growing in Canada, and it just makes it a little more easy to have clear public policy because now that is certainly the

Canadian consensus. And consensus is important and new ideas are important.

One of the effects of tobacco consumption is, of course, people—it affects their health, and some of those people lives can be extended through organ donation or, when they pass on, if they're on a donors list, their organs may be used to help others. But when you smoke, that can eliminate your ability to gift your organs, if that's what you have chosen to do, and so that's a double-ended effect. That's not a lot of people, but, you know, every life counts, and that's why I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to bring forward the legislation, The Gift of Life Act, on organ donation in this place and encourage the government through that legislation to deal with that issue.

Now, the government didn't do it, but that—Nova Scotia's done it—presumed consent, and that's probably where it's going to go in the future, but it shows that everything is connected.

I like to thank the interim leader of the opposition for her advice and suggestions over the last number of years, and I'd like to thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for seconding many of the pieces of legislation that I've put together. I am told that a—no MLA in the history of this place has—independent MLA, or in, you know—has introduced as many pieces of original legislation.

And I encourage, as this place goes forward, to come up with creative ideas and encourage the individualism of MLAs. It's just not always about parties.

Now, in this debate, there is some issues about the taxation and where will this additional revenue be spent—very relevant. I think it was the member from Minto that brought it up, but it's impossible for us to really have a thoughtful debate on that in this place, in this culture, because the Interim Supply bill, the very mechanism—or the Estimates, the very mechanism that allows us to ask these questions has not been presented to the House.

And, coming from the Ottawa culture, or that place, it seems very odd that that could be possible, Mr. Chair. What is not possible in this place or any other place is an Interim Supply bill for the next fiscal year when you haven't even gone through the current fiscal year. Like, that was just an absurdity.

So I hope the revenue from this tax will be used in a way that respects the taxpayer and the democratic process.

I'd like to thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for allowing me the opportunity to represent the people of Assiniboia freely and outside of the caucus because I was able to speak out on other tax measures that were bizarre that the provincial government tried to introduce, like the carbon tax, the made-in-Manitoba carbon tax, without a—I just wish that the government would have listened—listened—to anyone, even the NDP or the Liberal Party or Manitobans or the federal cousins from any party, and understand that by listening problems can be avoided or mitigated.

Now the Premier eventually had to reverse that decision and flip-flop. That left a fiscal hole, and it left, quite frankly, myself as the only politician in Manitoba for a year and a half speaking out against the made-in-Manitoba carbon tax. Not even the federal Conservative MPs would speak out against this made-in-Manitoba tax.

But the reason why it's so important that the people in this place seize the opportunities that they have as elected representatives is not so they can get re-elected, is to seize the opportunity, on behalf of their constituents, to make their constituents' lives better and allow all of us, individually and collectively, to reach our full potential as human beings.

And sometimes people need to be incentivized and, in the case of a sin tax, that's what happens, but it's very different than other taxes. Like, people don't need to smoke to live, but they need to live and they'll live better without smoke.

Now, with the wacky tobacky coming into—being legalized, that also ties into the issue of taxation and what will be appropriate or is appropriate for that product, and that will be for this place to decide or, more accurately, for the Premier to decide because this place doesn't seem to be involved in real decision-making, with all due respect to everyone—just the way the political culture is in Manitoba.

* (16:20)

But the conflict of interest legislation is really important for this place when—especially when there is a fundamental change in regulation on the wacky tobacky or anything else. So people can scrutinize and understand why licences are given or permits or

who's buying what land for what reason; that's why we have—every other Legislature has conflict of interest legislation. I brought forward a piece of legislation in March of 2017, 35 pages, did it based on Saskatchewan's model.

I even had to pay for the translation of that legislation myself because, I don't know, like the—something's wrong there, really wrong. It was \$1,500 out of my own pocket, but to get that legislation on the Order Paper as soon as it was possible to do so.

Mr. Chair, the other opportunity to represent the constituents also deals with believing that an MLA should be able to express a thought behind closed doors and, if not there, then outside the closed doors.

But that culture doesn't exist in Manitoba. My—and I think all parties are suffering from this except maybe the Liberal party, because they just became a party so they haven't had time to be—they haven't had time.

But the problem with the party system is that it does concentrate power, and we're seeing this in Ottawa as well. But in Manitoba it's much—when I was removed, and everyone on the other side of the Chamber knows this, because they were there—that the caucus is not involved in any of the drafting of the bills or input.

And if you do dare—dare—ask a question, you're shut down—shut down. And then when you ask a question at committee, well, then you're kicked out, gone.

Caucus should be a safe place for parties, for MLAs, to speak and exchange ideas, but it isn't in Manitoba, and that is wrong. So when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) stands up and gives the opposition parties heck on—or the Liberals heck on what's going on in Ottawa, wow, like, that is—what happened here was insignificant, like, not even measurable. But out you go.

It's like Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Remember when you—if you familiar with that book, it's whenever someone has a thought, they get slapped in the face. So you—the only way to get through this obstacle is just not to think. Well, that's not why people send us here.

I do want to thank the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen). He and I have been friends for a long time, long before we entered politics, and

I'm pleased to say that we're going to be friends long after politics.

And the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), who actually ran and beat me in a nomination a million years ago, has been an outstanding MLA, I believe, and I was very pleased when that member, when she was the Attorney General, took my private member's bill on Queen's Counsel and made it a government bill, because that got passed. That's great.

It'd be great if the government would adopt these good ideas from other parties, like it is today with this bill, because there are—is things that other people from other parties can offer. And again, that is one of the interesting things that I've been able to really appreciate more now that I've spent some time on this side of the House in the freedom caucus with my friend in the—from The Maples.

And I'm not sure if the member from Emerson has self-identified as a member of the freedom caucus or not, but he has the freedom to do so or do not. Unless it's a confidence vote, people should have the freedom to vote. Half the freedom caucus has often voted against each other. You know, one guy—one person would vote one way and the other would vote another. That's okay, because that's freedom. That's democracy, or that's the way it was supposed to be.

It wasn't supposed to be political parties. Each person, each MLA is elected and then confidence is demonstrated when the Premier or the leader or Prime Minister can demonstrate that through a confidence vote. That's fine. But, when it's not a confidence vote, there should be the ability, as there is in Ottawa and virtually every other Legislature, of having the freedom to vote in the interests of your constituents.

Now, I've had the privilege of being leader of the Manitoba Party for a period of time, and in that platform, it speaks about the freedom to represent your constituents. And for example, Madam Speaker, if a member in the agricultural community in rural Manitoba is in—has an issue and that is—and a member from the urban area—or the party's—the government is dominated by Winnipeg-area MLAs, why would that rural member be forced to vote just because it was—it would be in the urban interests and not in the rural interests, or vice versa?

Madam Speaker, I know—I'm sure that there are occasions where you wish you could go on a smoke

break, even though you don't smoke, out of this place, given all the heckling and stuff that goes on. I'm sure the clerks would like to take a break from us MLAs from time to time as well.

* (16:30)

But the issue of what is happening today, for example, is we're getting a lot done through unanimous consent. And not once in the three years that I've been here have I ever had the opportunity to ask a question in question period in the regular session. There was one way back in the super-extra-long session last summer, but not in a regular session.

So what an independent member does—and you could talk to John Nunziata or Elizabeth May or any number of independent members—is they use the other procedures. Be it denying unanimous consent, be it matters of privilege or points of order, these are all legitimate tools that can be used to make a point.

And if I may make a humble suggestion to the House leaders, in the next session, perhaps the rules should reflect the reality of independent members, because it's much better to include them in the process of this place than not. Let them ask a question from time to time. Because when we're passing a bill like this, Bill 31, with unanimous consent, that—we can do that in a day. And that's what we're doing because we're all in it—we've all talked about it. Now the government has improved in the last 12 months or so, but it is an example of a better way.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank you for your patience with all of us. I wish you all the best in keeping the chitter-chatter and heckling to a minimum. And I'm very proud to say that I have completed now three additional years in an elected Assembly without heckling. Pretty proud of that. I'm not so proud of some of the things that go on in this place, but it is what it is.

And, regardless, we do live in a great province in the best country in the world. And if you happen to live in Assiniboia—or, let's be honest, Charleswood, St. James, Assiniboia or Headingley, you happen to live in the best part of the country, and it's been an honour and a privilege to have the opportunity to represent the people of west Winnipeg. And I really appreciate the friendships and frenemies that I have made here in this Chamber over the last three years. And I wish you all the best, good luck and health.

And, in some cases, I wish some of you more luck than others.

But I like to thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a few words regarding this bill. And I would like to speak from a different perspective.

Different perspective is that the culture I come from, there's a—if you smoke, it's a kind of shame and you cannot openly smoke there. And I don't know on what basis the Tenth Guru banned smoking in 1699, whether it was scents or something else. I—now I'm curious to find out from some of learned people.

And so, in back where I was brought up in back, that place, smoking was a no-no. You can do all other vices, but smoking was a no-no. And at one time, when I came over here and other guy found out I'm here and he wanted to get some kind of advice how he can apply for immigration. He came as a visitor and he has beard and he had a turban.

So he appeared Sikh but he was a unionist and also a socialist, so he said he did not believe in God; he doesn't believe any religion, so he tried to show off how cool he is; he light up a cigarette and we were walking along the middle of the street and he starts smoking. So I asked him, Sikh are perceived not to smoke. Either you throw this cigarette away or you first become non-Sikh, like take off your hair.

And so he thrown that cigarette away and he never smoke until he cut off his hair, but even that was also under pressure not only because he wanted to smoke it was under pressure because, at that time, if you have a different appearance you won't be able to get a job and that's what happened. That's how what happened with me when I came to Vancouver and people told me, cut off your hair; take your turban off, otherwise you won't get a job.

So I tried a few months, I could not get a job. I went inside the washroom. I cried quite a bit, and I cut off my hair inside the washroom. Then I came out and smile at my friend. So that was not an easy thing to do.

But I come back to the smoking part. If you smoke in their culture, you will be shamed up. You won't be fully able to smoke and people won't like it. You can drink; you can do any other things, all the other vices.

So I am—I would not say that everybody should become Sikh so we don't have a problem for this tax,

but I would say there is some—some things are to learn from the other culture just like from seeking equality, equality of race or also on the freedom of religion and also equality of men and women and similarly be healthy not smoking.

So these kind of things also, problem from the other culture. So I just wanted to add this perspective. I am thinking for a long time why people are talking about tobacco over here and we never had that problem back over there, so that's why I was curious; that's why I tried to put this forward to make the House aware that there's one religion where smoking is totally banned since 1699.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further speakers wishing to speak on debate?

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I was a smoker until November 15, 1982, and I quit. And I quit because of fear of death, and the way that I quit was cold turkey, as in I decided on the very same day that my child told me that I should stop smoking, I threw away all of my lighters—one was a Zippo—and all of the ashtrays in my house and I had a full pack of cigarettes that I broke one by one.

*(16:40)

And it was part of a ritual that I convinced myself was very effective because, at that time, the cost of a pack of cigarettes, on November 15, 1982, was about three bucks. And it was expensive for me because my minimum wage then was only \$4.50. And it was a—I would say that, for those who have taken up the habit of smoking, I can't blame them because it was society that taught us that smoking then was cool and good and you will belong. You will belong to the elite of society who could smoke and inhale.

The main thing that happens when you smoke is that during the first few puffs that you take in, the feeling is that—you get a little bit dizzy because nicotine is a drug. And inhaling it sometimes—usually gives an extra flavour to it. And then, slowly, you blow the smoke. That's what you see in the advertising that was available at that time.

I started out when I was 17. Newport cigarettes and then Pall Mall, and then I graduated to Winston, which was stronger. And society then was very accommodating. And smoking was a very social thing. You even offer a stick or two to your friends

and light them up from your own cigarette. Or you do them a favour and give them the light.

And one of the main things that I believe the government should do regarding this smoking—like, right now we are on the topic of smoking. We should try to make it less socially acceptable. Not only expensive, but the educational component of the antismoking movement should be enhanced, promoted and funded. And it's not enough that we have an extra—how much, five cents, or half a cent for every stick of cigarette? It won't amount to much. People will still smoke and people will still puff and people will still inhale.

The biggest problems that have been found associated with smoking was the medical issues like lung cancer and throat cancer. When I was volunteering at the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, somebody approached me with that handheld voice-recognition system that you stick to your throat when you don't have the vocal cords anymore. And he asked me, do you still smoke? And I said, no, not anymore. He says, good; look what happened to me. It was robot-like. And the—it gave me that extra confirmation that I did the right thing when I quit.

But the inspiration for quitting were my sons. I had three—I still have three. And they are all non-smokers. Why? Because I showed them that it does not help their health if they started it. Because as soon as you start it, it seems to be very difficult to get away from it, because most of your friends, especially when you're drinking beer, are all smoking.

But I never drank beer with mentholated cigarettes. They don't taste good, but the best thing that really struck me was when a friend of mine, actually my wife's first cousin, he used to smoke a lot. His name is Eduardo—Eduardo Atayde, God bless his soul. May he rest in peace. He was diagnosed with lung cancer sometime in 2007 and he went to the hospital in Stanford in California, the university hospital, and he was operated on. It was found that he just has a small smidgen of a lung cancer tumour. So he was told if you stop smoking, then you might live a little bit longer.

And he did. He stopped smoking. He visited with us and the problem that he had was that all of his four household members, meaning the wife and three daughters, were all smokers, and they did not quit when he did. They were all smoking and the chimney of the house seems to be full of smoke

every day and every night. And I used to blame them. I said, why don't you help your dad, right? And he died eventually, three years ago. He left a huge estate, but then—even then—even when you have all the money in the world, it doesn't mean anything anymore, especially when you're coughing and puffing and dying because of your smoking.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 31, The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 24—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019

Madam Speaker: As previously determined we will now move to Bill 24—second reading on Bill 24, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns, who has unlimited speaking time.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So I think I only—I still have, like, 14 and a half hours to beat the member for Steinbach's (Mr. Goertzen)—and, as you know, Madam Speaker, I'm still on the calls to action—truth and reconciliation calls to action No. 1, subsection 3, so we still have 93 left to go. So I'm just going find them as I'm moving around here and start from where we left off yesterday.

So, as I said, Madam Speaker, we got to calls to action child welfare, which is No. 1, and we are only at subsection No. 3, so I will continue. No, pardon me, we were at subsection No. 4, so child welfare No. 1, subsection No. 5, states: requiring that all child welfare decision-makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.

* (16:50)

I'm not sure if we know—or most people would know entirely what that would mean, and what that would mean, Madam Speaker, is something that Justice Murray Sinclair, now Senator Murray Sinclair, obviously someone very respected and

revered within the indigenous community, not only here in Manitoba, but across the country—and, in fact, obviously has a very special place in lots of Manitoba indigenous people's hearts, but also I think that everyone in the House can claim Senator Murray Sinclair as a relative and as our own in respect of the groundbreaking work that both he and Justice Hamilton did in respect of the 1991 Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

And what former Justice minister—or, Justice Murray Sinclair has repeatedly spoken about during the whole process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was that it has taken us generations as indigenous people to be where we are today in respect of that intergenerational trauma of the Indian residential schools and what that has done to our families, and what that has done more particularly in respect of parenting.

And so he has often talked about that it has taken us generations—it has taken the state generations to ensure that indigenous people occupy the place and space that we occupy right now. And it will take us generations to get out of that in partnership and in concert with and as the lead of our own destinies.

And so that is what that is referring to, so that when those that work within social service and those that make decisions over the lives of indigenous people—and children more particularly—that in every scenario that you come into contact with and that you are meant to render a decision, that you understand that it's not just potentially that mother or that father or that couple and the context of their current situation, it is what that mother and what that father also went through intergenerationally.

And—so that when you provide an analysis or a plan of care—or if, you know, part of that care is apprehension—that you do understand and you take in that consideration of the impact of residential school which, again, many indigenous families I wouldn't say lost the skill of parenting, but certainly the skill of parenting in perhaps a healthy—the most healthy and loving way, is—there's an obstacle to that and there's an obstacle for peoples' ability to be able to parent in the most healthy and loving way when you are still in the midst of your own trauma and you are getting triggered, as parents often do.

So, in respect of child welfare, No. 2 for the calls to action is: We call upon the federal government, in collaboration—so, in partnership—with the provinces and territories, to prepare and publish annual reports on the number of Aboriginal children—First Nation,

Inuit and Metis—who are in care, compared with non-Aboriginal children as well as the reasons for apprehension, the total spending on prevention and care services by child welfare agencies and the effectiveness of various interventions.

Certainly, there's a lot to be noted there, particularly when we look at some of the things that in the last year have happened here in Manitoba in respect of child welfare.

So we know that the Pallister government moved to block funding. And we know that First Nations and Metis—both northern and southern, actually, First Nation authorities and First Nation chiefs and those that are working within First Nation CFS agencies, do and have brought forward very significant concerns in respect of block funding.

And I'll relay a conversation that I had with one of our First Nation CFS directors—who will remain nameless because, as I said yesterday, there are quite a few people in Manitoba that are scared to speak out for fear that their funding will be even further reduced. And I would suggest that this individual would be nervous if I were to name them.

But this individual shared that because the government was working off of not the current years—the current fiscal year and the amount of children that are in that particular year, but is actually working off a formula of maybe—I think it's 2017, 2018 or 2016—the number of children wouldn't reflect the number of children that are in care at that particular time.

And so the formula for block funding would be less than it would be for that particular year. But what this individual also shared was, they said, well, Nahanni, let's just say that you have your block funding for that year, and that money, you're allowed to move it, you know, do what you need to do.

I think one of the most famous examples was Richard De La Ronde from Sandy Bay CFS, who had—who shared the story about that, you know, because he was able to move dollars around, he was able to buy an air-conditioning unit and actually able to keep the kids together. And I think that that is a very poignant story, and it's a good example of, you know, very simple measures that we can do to keep families together rather than apprehend them.

But what this individual said, like, yes, that's great, but let's just say that your block funding, again, which is not based on that current particular year, that block funding—let's just say all of a

sudden—and this was actually what happened to this particular First Nation CFS agency, was that the previous week, they had five new families, children who were apprehended.

But, Madam Speaker, each of those five families had five children. So actually, in the span of, like, I think it was a week or two weeks, I can't remember, but very, very close together, this CFS agency actually had 25 new additional children that were under their care, for which the block funding does not account for.

So we know that First Nations CFS agencies have brought forward concerns and attention to the minister about—then it forces CFS agencies to operate, in some respects, in deficits, because you're not accounting for children that are going to be coming in. And that is problematic.

While there is a bit more flexibility, in respect of preventative dollars, it is putting agencies and children at risk that there aren't the dollars that CFS agencies need to be able to do the work that they need to be able to do. And so in some respects, you're actually operating with less dollars. But—and so, you know, I would suggest, probably, the government would argue that they're not, and you know, everything is hunky-dory.

However, if you have many, many situations where all of a sudden you have a bunch more children coming into care who had to be apprehended for whatever reason it may be, but if you have them and they're coming into care and now—so the CFS agency is operating with less money because now you have more children, then what that does is it begs the question: How much dollars are left for preventative activities?

And I would suggest that most folks in the Chamber, I would hope, but certainly most, if not all indigenous peoples would suggest that one of the ways to reduce the number of children in care is to substantially invest in preventative measures.

So obviously with dollars, obviously—which, again, the previous call to action referred to—with more knowledge, being equipped with more knowledge from—in respect of workers when they're coming into contact with families, but certainly with more commitment and dedication to prevention, rather than intervention, except for, Madam Speaker, in those cases where apprehension is absolutely necessary.

And so, as you recall, yesterday, Madam Speaker, I spoke about how every member opposite should get up and apologize to indigenous children because they were, you know, in the midst of all of this, were attempting to introduce a bill that would actually—a legislative framework that would adopt out indigenous children.

Now, you know, some would argue that they were attempting to do that to reduce costs and get children out of CFS, but at the risk of indigenous

children's rights and safety and connection to culture and our people and our languages and our ceremonies. So I think that it is, you know, number—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have unlimited speaking time continuing.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 30, 2019

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>