

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 10, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege coming out of events of Thursday afternoon. I will be brief.

The issue, Madam Speaker, is obstruction, security and functionality of this place. When the evacuation notice was provided, Madam Speaker, the pathway to the exit was unclear to many of us, or some of us. Particularly, the elevators were not operative and it took some time to determine which elevator was working and it turned out that that elevator ended up being almost too small.

I bring this up as an example of we need to go further than the excellent memo that you and the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) signed on Thursday morning, coincidentally. And, by the way, my congratulations to both you and the Attorney General for signing that in a very quick manner.

However, it does seem that we need to be able to communicate with each member the easiest egresses out of the building and also for the members of the Assembly. The clerks were very helpful in directing myself and others to the exit, but it took time. And in a real emergency situation, that may not be time that we have.

Madam Speaker, I will refer to a couple of ‘precedences’ for your consideration: physical obstruction, assault and molestation. Referring to a case on February 17th—it also—1998, this can be found in the Commons. I'm going to table it. I don't think it is necessary for me to read it out loud, but I think you'll understand the relevance. I'm also going to table a situation on Parliament Hill when the American President visited, and the challenge that occurred when members of Parliament were not able to access the building.

Madam Speaker, and that brings up another situation that arise out of Thursday that we need to reflect on. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Cabinet were on the floor—or in the front lawn of the

Legislature and for a number of reasons that is not very good. And not only is there a physical issue there and a safety issue, there's also harassment and intimidation possibilities if a certain lobby group wanted to get access to the Premier or Cabinet members, not to mention everyone else was out front.

Madam Speaker, in my motion about to come forward, I ask if we can look at different areas to gather people rather than in front of the Legislative Building and along major roadways—perhaps, for example, at the rear of the building or safe places in the building. It was a beautiful fall day on Thursday. Sometimes Winnipeg weather is not always gorgeous, according to rumour, and what do we do in those cases?

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from The Maples, that the Speaker, LAMC and independent MLAs form a committee to deal with the aforementioned issues of interference and obstruction that go beyond the memo of understanding announced on October 5th, 2017.

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

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I hope you had a good Thanksgiving weekend, and I hope all members of the Chamber had a good Thanksgiving weekend.

I think it does allow us the opportunity to actually stop and take time and be cognizant of the things that we should be thankful for. And certainly, the day's—or the afternoon event that occurred last Thursday, I think, make us bear fruit that we should be having those conversations with friends and family as well regarding safety.

And I appreciate the member opposite raising this particular issue. We certainly, as a government, recognize that safety is paramount to all of us here and certainly to the visitors to this great building. We recognize that, and we certainly recognize the MOU

that you signed with the government in terms of moving forward in terms of—safety here in the building is very paramount of concern to all of us.

And it really is not the end point. It's more of a beginning point, and we know there—much more work has to be done. And I think, as a result of the fire drill we had just a couple weeks ago, the event that occurred on Thursday, this will give us the opportunity to really evaluate some of the shortcomings that we do have here in terms of our process.

So I'm looking forward to having those debriefs done by the various stakeholders that are involved, and there is a number of stakeholders involved throughout the building, and certainly with the police and fire as well. So we do look forward to having those discussions and seeing how we can move forward in terms of making sure that each and every member here and the members of the viewing public are safe when they come to the building. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I just want to put on the record very briefly that the issues of concern raised are ones which I think should concern us all, and I thank the MLA for raising it.

Madam Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I am going to take this this matter under advisement to consult the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 227—The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Mandatory Training and Continuing Education)

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), that Bill 227, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Mandatory Training and Continuing Education), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce, for first reading, Bill 227, The Provincial Court Amendment Act. This bill would require newly appointed provincial court judges to undergo sexual assault awareness training within 90 days of taking the oath or affirmation of office. Until they have completed the training, they would not be allowed to hear sexual assault cases.

This bill would also require newly appointed judicial justices of the peace to undergo training on the subjects of domestic violence, stalking and

sexual assault awareness before they could hear application for protection orders.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration. Miigwech.

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

Committee reports?

* (13:40)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table the Annual Report, Manitoba Justice, 2016-17.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I rise today to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2017-2018 Revenue Estimates

Madam Speaker: Any further tablings? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Sunrise Performing Arts Centre of Excellence

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize the 25th anniversary of Sunrise Performing Arts Centre of Excellence, commonly known as SPACE, in Oakbank, Manitoba.

SPACE is the not-for-profit charitable organization that brings the world of performing arts to the people of all ages in the RM of Springfield and surrounding areas. They provide recreational and higher educational arts classes, as well as workshops, membership and training to youth, adults, seniors, individuals with physical disabilities and low-income families.

SPACE is providing a positive and stimulating environment for youth and adults to gain knowledge and skills and to share the love of performing arts, while at the same time developing self-esteem, self-confidence, physical and emotional well-being by offering structured classes and performance opportunities.

Through their 25 years of program delivery, we have witnessed first-hand the power that performing arts has in developing our youth and keeping our seniors active and engaged. It is not just about learning to dance, act or sing; SPACE is a place for

self-discovery. It is a place where young people learn to turn dreams into attainable goals; it is a place where seniors can stay active both physically and mentally; it is a place where the feeling and energy within oneself can be expressed through the movement, voice and performing arts.

I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to the Sunrise Performing Arts Centre of Excellence, the executive director and the staff for their contribution and excellent work that they have done for the last 25 years of performance in our community.

Please join me in recognizing the executive director, Wendy Bobby, and the staff of the Sunrise Performing Arts Centre of Excellence.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Further statements?

North End Community Renewal Corporation

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Neighbourhood associations have been vital aspects of every community, building relationships, improving safety, beautifying neighbourhoods and fostering community.

For 20 years, the North End Community Renewal Corporation has worked with communities to co-ordinate engagement activities and develop neighbourhood plans and priorities to revitalize the North End. They are committed to social, economic and cultural renewal of the North End.

In 2014, the Dufferin Residents' Association was looking at community policing models. They reallocated some funds and purchased the jackets that assisted in starting up the Bear Clan. I was honoured to attend their community barbecue this summer, where I witnessed them connecting with over 300 community members.

Recently, the Point Douglas residents' association painted the Main Street underpass and worked with Manitoba Hydro to install brighter lighting, making it a safer, brighter place for pedestrians. They also have been beautifying their community through painting the hydro poles.

Neighbourhood associations encourage residents to take action against crime, disrepair and ownership of their communities while creating a safer place to live.

Neighbourhoods Alive! provides community associations and corporations with financial support

to carry out their projects. These projects have huge benefits for communities, like improving housing conditions, community facilities and/or increasing opportunities for education, training and employment. Many of these projects provide recreation opportunities for youth, seniors while keeping them safe and healthy.

Today we are joined in the gallery by the members of the North End Community Renewal Corporation and the Bear Clan. I would also like to recognize the Point Douglas, William Whyte and Dufferin residents' associations. On behalf of all members, please join me in recognizing them for their continuous efforts in revitalizing Winnipeg's north communities.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas.

Mrs. Smith: I ask for leave to include the names of the North End Community Renewal Corporation and Bear Clan.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

North End Community Renewal Corporation and Bear Clan representatives: Dawn Sands, Kyle Mason, Dawn Sands, James Favel

Legion National Youth Track and Field Championships

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Madam Speaker, congratulations to Barb Andrew and the organizing committee of the 2017 Legion National Youth Track and Field Championships that were held August 10th to 12th at the UCT Stadium in Brandon.

Over 700 athletes between the ages of 14 and 17 represented all provinces and territories and competed on the new track that was finished just in time for this national competition.

Mr. Angus Stanfield, the Legion national sports chairman, opened the competition and asked the athletes to think of Vimy Ridge as it has been 100 years since the battle. His grandfather, Donald Kennedy, was a piper and served for Canada in battles at Mount Sorrel, Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele. Angus learned to play the bagpipes from his grandfather when he was six and is now the proud owner of his grandfather's 102 year-old pipes. Angus played them during the closing ceremony.

At the closing banquet, Barb Andrew and Jackie Nichol were surprised by the athletes. They lined up to personally thank the two for being key organizers of the Legion National Youth Track and Field Championships.

Madam Speaker, the event almost fell victim to another failed promise of the former Manitoba NDP government. The former minister of Sport had sent the organizing committee a letter confirming a \$30,000 grant. The NDP had two years to fulfill this promise and failed. The funding promise was not disclosed in the briefing books but only discovered when the letter was brought to the attention of the MLA for Brandon East and myself. With the help of the current Premier (Mr. Pallister) of Manitoba and the then-minister of Sport, the MLA for Riel, we were able to make funding available and ensure that the event would occur. Thank you for your help and support.

The 2018 Legion National Youth Track and Field Championships will take place from August 10th to 12th in Brandon again at the UCT stadium. I encourage all members to attend and cheer on our young athletes from across Canada.

Island Lake Wildfires

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I would like to commend the people of my beloved Island Lake communities: Garden Hill, St. Theresa Point and Wasagamack First Nations. These are all remote, fly-in reserves. None of them have an airport on their island. Everyone travels by boat, up to 15 minutes for Was., to get to the closest airstrip.

There were so many heroic actions that took place during our recent forest fire evacuation. Initially, only about 300 people from Wasagamack were going to be evacuated. But within a short period, due to the shift in winds and due to the fact that a request for water bombers was denied, everyone needed to get out; nearly 1,200 people needed to flee.

It was all hands on deck. Anyone with a boat quickly mobilized and was on the lake carrying members to the safety of my reserve, St. Theresa Point. Although it was daylight, the skies were blackened by the acrid smoke. Boats nearly swamped one another. Children and elders were doused by the cold northern lake. Burning embers were raining down.

They were taken to our schools. Anyone who had an extra blanket, mattress or pillow, shared.

Many families began cooking or bringing donations of food, Pampers and baby formula to the schools. For the cold, wet people, donations of clothing were brought in abundance. The evacuees did not want for anything while under our own people's care.

The worry and fear remained ever present.

I would also like to commend the evacuees themselves. They were—there were many gentle, forgiving acts demonstrated. There was such a huge demonstration of patience by them for the imposed 'riggid' processes. I'll never get tired of hearing how respectful and peaceful my people are.

To all the Island Lakers, kitchi-miigwech. I love you all. I'm truly blessed to serve you.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Andrea Sweetland

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): I stand in the House today to acknowledge all of our rural volunteers and board members that dedicate so much of their time to the betterment of the Interlake riding. They are the glue that keeps our rural life cohesive and they do such an amazing job bringing forward the community passions.

* (13:50)

We have certain volunteers that stand out in each community, but today I want to mention one in particular, Andrea Sweetland. Andrea has spent years volunteering before and after retirement, but most recently landed on the Eriksdale creamery museum.

She had dedicated countless hours to increase the awareness and bring in visitors into the Interlake area, showing that we are truly a tourist destination.

Earlier in the year, Andrea put on one of Eriksdale Museum's exhibits on a tour of Manitoba, with a stopover here at the Legislative Building.

Just recently, Andrea was involved in arranging for the design and erection of a monument for the founder of Eriksdale, Jonas Erikson.

When memories fade, our history is stored in museums, books and projects like the Erikson Monument. It is volunteers like Andrea that store our memories and local history before our past is lost forever.

It was my pleasure to be in the—at the Interlake tourism awards night earlier this summer. We were blessed with so many dedicated people from the

entire Interlake region, but one winner in particular stood out not only to myself but to the entire board.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler) and myself were on hand to present Andrea with the Award of Distinction.

It is the work from people like Andrea Sweetland that help make the Interlake such a great place to live.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Andrea Sweetland.

Introduction of Guests

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

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today His Excellency Mr. Raoul Delcorde, ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium, and Mr. Jean-Marie De Clercq, honorary consul for Belgium.

And, on behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

And, to my right, in the loge we have Marcel Laurendeau, the former MLA for St. Norbert. And, on behalf of all members, we welcome you here today as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CancerCare Funding Government Intent

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Almost every family in this province has been touched by cancer. The disease hits friends, family and loved ones at any time or place. It's why it's difficult to understand why the Premier ordered a \$2.5-million cut to CancerCare Manitoba this past February. Millions of dollars for staff and programs to help patients: cut. This is a cut that will weaken the programming offered by CancerCare.

The First Minister ought to explain to Manitobans why these services are being reduced.

Will the Premier explain why he targeted CancerCare for cuts?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): If I could, Madam Speaker, I'd just like to say that as a family we, like many Manitoba families, have experienced cancer directly and personally. But this past weekend we were able to join together as a family and

celebrate Thanksgiving, and I hope that other members of this House and people who work here and who are watching at home were able to do the same. And we were able to give thanks for many things. But I would—I want to, on behalf of all of our members, express thanks to all of our families personally, because this is a career which impacts on the families of all the members of this Chamber, and I think too infrequently we say thank you. So I would like to thank you to the families of all MLAs in this Chamber today for their tremendous sacrifice and the contribution they make to this institution through helping us here do the work we do.

Having lost my dad to cancer, I have no shortage of tremendous emotion around the issues affecting people who have the disease, who love those who do, and I would tell the member that that is why we are investing close to half a billion dollars more in the Health budget this year than the NDP ever did, because we care about the people of Manitoba deeply.

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

Mr. Kinew: It seems that the Premier and I share something in common, having both lost fathers to cancer. It is with, you know, that life experience in mind that I am asking for an explanation as to why some of these cuts are being carried out. Specifically, in this letter, which I will table, obtained through freedom of information law, we see some of the cuts that are being carried out, the layoffs. We see that the director of medical physics for CancerCare, the director of radiation therapy were laid off. Medical physics, radiation therapy, these are important parts of the care of Manitoba families deserve. The Premier still has a chance to reverse these layoffs, because they just don't make sense.

Will he commit to investing in CancerCare Manitoba or will he continue to order cuts to the health care of Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I will begin by correcting the member on the false assertion he put in his preamble. The actual budget for CancerCare this year is up, not down; it's up \$5 million this year. So in actual fact, he's put a misstatement on the record and needs to do some further research.

In respect of the realities of the system that we inherited, Madam Speaker, there were, no doubt, some serious problems with it. I think the member has admitted that and should. We inherited a broken

system. The member says go slow in fixing it. We can't agree with that approach when the system is broken and is affecting so many lives. We need to go at it, and we need to fix it on the basis of good research, which the previous government had and ignored; on the basis of good statistical analysis, which, again, the previous government had and ignored; and on the basis of expert input and advice from those who can help us fix a broken system, which the previous government had and also ignored.

It takes courage to change things, Madam Speaker. This government has the courage to change things for the better.

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

CancerCare Expansion Request for Government Commitment

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): So the facts tabled in that letter outline how there were a number of layoffs for positions at CancerCare, including the director of medical physics and the director of radiation therapy. Other facts that we had been able to obtain through freedom of information showed a \$2.5-million cut to CancerCare Manitoba, and these were just a part of the reductions. We know that there was also the decision to cut the new CancerCare headquarters.

Dr. Sri Navaratnam, president of CancerCare Manitoba, said his organization was, quote, out of capacity, and the new headquarters were, quote, really needed.

The Premier is cutting the services that Manitoba families count on the most. The Premier has an opportunity to stop these cuts and he can start investing in keeping people healthy in the community.

Will he commit to funding a new headquarters for CancerCare Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, not only did we inherit a broken health-care system with the longest wait times in Canada for emergency care and for many other diagnostic tests and treatment from the previous administration, we also inherited a billion-dollar deficit just their last year alone.

So, Madam Speaker, we have a fiscal challenge, and after a decade of, well, what, decay, I guess we describe it, we're working to fix the finances; after a decade of decay, we're repairing the services; and

after a decade of decline we're working to rebuild the economy as well. Working on all these fronts takes focus; we have the focus. It takes a commitment; we have the commitment. And it takes a willingness to admit there's a problem, which the member opposite apparently doesn't have the ability to do.

We understand there's a serious problem, Madam Speaker. We're working together as a unified team to address it.

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

Health-Care Premium Government Intent

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I would have liked to hear a more fulsome explanation from the First Minister about why these cuts are being made to CancerCare Manitoba.

Life is getting harder in Manitoba and the Premier's actions are making things worse. Emergency rooms are closing, health organizations are facing layoffs and cutbacks, hydro rates are rising for homeowners and the owners of businesses, and now the Premier is floating the idea of a health-care tax. This could cost Manitoba families some \$1,200 a year. Even as the Premier invests less, he is asking Manitobans to pay more.

The Premier has a chance to clear the air with Manitobans.

Will he commit today that there will be no health-care tax?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member who, when he was running for leader promised a new direction, is showing that direction is nothing but the same old direction, Madam Speaker; false assertions in his preamble.

* (14:00)

The fact is that we're investing over half a billion dollars more in this year's budget than the NDP ever did in health care. So his dull repetition of the word cut doesn't work. It doesn't work because we're focusing investments on health care, because it is a No. 1 priority

While the members opposite sat on their hands and refused to join with us in condemning the federal government's reductions in support for health care, the reduced partnership for health care, we were

standing up for health care, Madam Speaker, and we will continue to do so.

The member's idea of innovation is to propose an estate tax, Madam Speaker, a tax on people when they die, a death tax. That was discarded 46 years ago by the people of Canada, but the member puts it forward as an innovative solution to the problems facing health care today. It is nothing of the kind. It's nothing of the kind. It's just an opportunity for the NDP to try to take credit, taking money away from dead people's families, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Even when we raise questions about the health care of Manitobans, the Premier finds it irresistible to always bring it back to a discussion about money.

The Premier spent the last election campaign promising Manitobans he would protect front-line services; now he's cutting them. One of the few things he is spending money on: a \$1.5-million ad campaign designed to persuade Manitobans that these aren't cuts. Yet there's millions gone from cancer care, layoffs of staff and the cancellation of the cancer core—CancerCare headquarters. To add insult to injury, the Premier—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —has designed a rigged survey to try and bolster his case to charge a health-care tax.

I have been conducting my own survey. Survey says: Manitobans don't want health-care premiums.

Will the Premier commit to rejecting a health-care tax on Manitoba families?

You know they don't like getting stuck.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, well, the member's confusions reflect in his own preamble. He says I bring it around to money and asks me a question about tax. What does he think people use to pay taxes?

He's proposing a tax on dead people and their families, Madam Speaker, as a solution to the problems facing this province, and we don't agree. We don't think that's a wise solution.

What is wise, however, is to trust Manitobans to have a healthy discussion, an intelligent discussion about their No. 1 priority. That's what we're doing. And, Madam Speaker, we've well over

10,000 Manitobans already who are participating in that discussion, and we thank them for it. And we encourage the member's opposite to not be so afraid to ask Manitobans to talk about health care, and don't be afraid to listen to their point of view when it comes to health care and how to address the problems, rather than simply advocating they wait. They're tired of waiting. They're tired of NDP wait times. They don't want to wait any more. They want the solutions to be found. And we're going to find them.

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

Mr. Kinew: I pride myself, in my career in public service to date, in taking the time to listen. I was listening to the First Minister, and I did not hear him reject the idea of charging Manitobans a health-care tax.

The Premier, system wide, is in such a rush to change our health-care system. He forgets he may actually make things worse. And, if he does bring in this regime of health-care premiums, we know that they will be investing less even as they ask Manitobans to pay more. And we don't think that that's right.

We know a new health-care tax would make life harder—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —for families.

The Premier has a choice. He can continue his plan for cuts to health-care services and a new health-care tax, or he can make investments in primary prevention and care for seniors.

So, finally, a simple yes or no question: Does he plan to charge a health-care tax?

Mr. Pallister: The member is going to have trouble getting on that great course of righteousness he's preaching to everyone here when it comes to standing up for Manitobans and their tax regime, Madam Speaker, given the fact that the previous administration, which was an NDP government, I remind him, jacked up taxes on virtually everything that people in Manitoba purchase and need, without consulting, without asking, without going to the people and saying, what do you think? In fact, they can't produce a single shred of evidence that one Manitoban said that they should add the PST to their home insurance, or that they should broaden the PST to their benefits at work, or that they should, in fact,

deepen the PST and raise it. Not one Manitoban was asked or involved.

So I don't mind the member criticizing this government for listening, Madam Speaker. It's what we do, and it's what they never did.

Public Housing Funding Decrease Effect on Low-Income Families

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Low-income families are preparing for less money in their pockets at the—after this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) cuts to Manitoba Housing. These housings will cost some tenants \$720 more a year. The minister's attacks on Manitoba Housing comes after he cut the Rent Assist benefit for over 7,000 families, reducing benefits by up to \$1,200 a year for some. He also sold off a 373-unit building on Smith Street.

An increase in rent or a reduction in subsidies means all have to choose between buying food or paying their utilities.

Will the minister admit that his cuts to Housing and Rent Assist will put low-income families further back?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Acting Minister of Families): I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

This—members on this side of the House believe that we, in fact, provide more than adequate housing for the members—for individuals in Manitoba. Under NDP 'mismanagint' Manitoba had the worst child poverty rates in the country and the highest food bank use in all of Canada. We saw it spike. It is shameful, and, as a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, the member opposite should remember that they increased the PST 1 per cent across the board, costing Manitoba families \$2,400 a year right out of their back pockets.

It's very disappointing, Madam Speaker, that the member opposite would even bring up this type of an issue.

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

Mrs. Smith: I just want to remind my colleague about the homeless rates increasing under this current government. In today's paper, the minister would have seen how the Lord Selkirk Park housing complex has been rejuvenated. This is thanks to the hard-working members of that community organization. The outcomes of the families that live there are improved dramatically.

The minister will also have seen in this recent report, project-determined Manitobans pay almost \$50,000 for every person who is homeless. This includes legal costs, health-care services and shelter costs, and these are dramatically increasing as our homeless population grows.

We know that housing is—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cox: Thanks again to the member opposite.

We will continue to help families in need by providing \$87 million to further support employment, income and rental assistance programming in 2017-18. In Manitoba—has one of the most generous Rent Assist programs in the country and one of the lowest rent-g geared-to-income rates in the country. We're proud of this record, Madam Speaker.

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

Housing System Changes Implementation of KPMG Recommendations

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Cuts to Rent Assist and housing are only beginning. The KPMG confirms that the minister is considering a regressive voucher system which shuts vulnerable Manitobans out of affordable housing and effectively privatizes our system. It also calls on the minister to sell off valuable housing stock rather than making house repairs like the building at 313 Smith Street.

Will this minister commit today to not privatizing social housing?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Acting Minister of Families): Again, thank you to the member opposite.

The member opposite should know that it was their lack of action by the NDP that resulted in nearly a half a billion dollars in deferred maintenance while they were government. It's shameful, Madam Speaker, and we are working together with all organizations to ensure that Manitobans have housing when they need it.

* (14:10)

Tax Credit Funding Implementation of KPMG Recommendations

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Things are getting harder for people in Manitoba. People are incredibly anxious about having to pay the increasing bills the Pallister government is sending them.

The KPMG report confirmed life will get more and more expensive under this Pallister government. The report recommends rolling back millions of dollars in tax credits that help make life affordable for families, students and seniors.

Why is the Premier (Mr. Pallister) taking more from Manitobans while cutting our vital services?

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

The Fiscal Performance Review started with an assessment of the system and it indicated back, as all Manitobans now know, that this province faces some very significant challenges in respect of an almost \$900-million inherited deficit, a debt that had doubled in the space of six fiscal years and debt service costs that have gone to almost \$1 billion.

Madam Speaker, that's the starting point. The difference between us and them is we're asking for advice, listening, and we'll act on the evidence.

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

Ms. Fontaine: According to the KPMG report, the Pallister government is considering reducing the Education Property Tax Credit which provides \$700 in tax relief for Manitobans. That's on top of the cuts already made: the seniors' property tax credit, the tuition rebate, the rising costs like Hydro and MPI. It's simply too much change too fast with think—without thinking or caring about the consequences for Manitobans.

Why is the Premier focused only on the bottom line without any compassion for Manitobans?

Mr. Friesen: I know that the member took the same course that the official Leader of the Opposition went down when he said it was too fast—moving too fast. And, Madam Speaker, I would reflect on the fact that when it comes to the NDP, consider the provincial nominee numbers where the wait times went to five years, consider childcare spaces in this province that went past 13,000, and now they're saying it's too fast to go.

Madam Speaker, it is clear we have a problem in this province that we believe all Manitobans must face head on. We won't take a go-it-slow. We'll take adequate action to do this on a stable pathway to improvement.

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

Education Affordability Government Response

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): For young people starting out it is simply too much. Rising tuition and fees while cuts to the tuition tax rebate that help young people afford to buy a house or pay bills is particularly egregious. And rising costs across the board from this Pallister government is putting affordability out of reach for so many young Manitobans.

Why is the Premier focused only on the bottom line on the backs of young Manitobans?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the member's assertion is false. This government is focused on trying to improve the situation, a situation that is packed with challenges.

But, Madam Speaker, let's be clear: the member's assertion is that, somehow, they want Manitobans to wait as they wanted Manitobans to wait when it came to educational improvements. When it came to ER reductions they wanted Manitobans to wait, and they're saying now that Manitobans should continue to wait.

We don't agree. We take a different view. We believe that Manitobans have waited long enough for improvement. We are on the road to recovery for a better system for all Manitobans.

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba Government Funding Intent

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, there were 138 Manitobans hospitalized for opioid poisoning in the 2016-17 fiscal year. That's one hospitalization almost every other day, not to mention other interventions.

The opioid crisis, including the abuse of fentanyl and carfentanil has impacted families and communities in every corner of Manitoba. Manitobans have repeatedly called on the government to take action, but instead the government has directed the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba to make deep cuts to its budget.

Why did this government cut funding to AFM in the middle of a deadly, serious addictions crisis?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, the member was correct when he talks about the challenge of opioid addiction in Manitoba and across

Canada. He is wrong after that in his assertions that he made.

He will know that this government has taken specific and strong action when it comes to the opioid crisis in Canada. Certainly, one of those actions was looking at making Suboxone more easily available, as we did a couple of months ago. I already can report to the House there's been an uptake in Suboxone which we are not happy about because there are those who need to use it, but we are happy that it's available for those who can use it to better deal with their addictions.

So the member is incorrect. We've taken strong action and will continue to be leaders on this file, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: The Winnipeg Police Service says the growing abuse of methamphetamine has contributed to the substantial increase in crime. Action is needed to deal with this highly addictive and dangerous drug. Instead, the government's directed the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba to make deep cuts to its budget, and the minister is well aware that his government demanded cuts of \$800,000 by AFM this year—\$800,000 without explanation or context as to how they arrived at this money or how it would benefit care.

Why did this government put efficiency targets ahead of funding to AFM for important services in the middle of an addictions crisis in this province?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the issue of methamphetamine is certainly a challenge in Winnipeg and across Manitoba and, indeed, across Canada.

I remember several years ago, before methamphetamine had truly taken hold in Manitoba, looking for any information on that deadly drug. I asked the former government to produce any information we could bring to schools to educate young people about the deadly effects of methamphetamine. There was nothing. In fact, I had to go to the United States to get information because this government hadn't produced any information.

I appreciate there needs to be strong action. We're taking strong action, unlike the former government, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: If the Minister of Health would take the time to speak to the police or to addictions workers or to communities, they would tell him that methamphetamine use has exploded in this province over the past year and there is nothing being done about it.

An \$800,000 cut to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba means less services for Manitobans struggling with addiction. This has an impact on the lives of Manitobans—many, many Manitobans and their families—and providing addiction services is a front-line service.

Why has this Health Minister broken his government's promise to protect front-line services in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the former Attorney General, the member for Minto, will know that the methamphetamine problem took root when he was the Attorney General. Now, his lack of action at that time is no excuse for a government not to take action, and that is why we continue on the addictions front.

In addition, of course, to putting Suboxone more easily available for those who needed treatment, we've continued to provide education. We work with AFM to have forums right across the province. I understand that there are many people who came, parents and others, who had learnt about the deadly issues of drugs, methamphetamine and opioids.

We will continue to take action and try to continue to correct the course that was set by that former Attorney General.

Corydon Primary Care Clinic Closure Request for Reversal

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, the Corydon Primary Care Clinic, which serves over 5,000 Winnipeggers, is being shut down and eliminated in early 2018. Many patients, including many seniors, use the clinic because it's close to where they live. They are concerned.

The Corydon Primary Care Clinic is a prime example of this PC government cutting before consulting with local residents and before realizing it will save much less than the government's estimate.

Ms. Lori Lamont said recently that with the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre closing, patients could go to nearby primary care, and now the government is closing that too.

Will the Minister of Health now reconsider his decision to close the Corydon Primary Care Centre?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, the former Liberal leader, perhaps future Liberal leader, indicates that he thinks that there should be consultations. Of course there were consultations. Dr. Peachey who was hired by the former NDP government undertook 18 months of consultation to look at how to better design the health-care system in Winnipeg so that we could lower wait times right across the system.

* (14:20)

But where we didn't have consultations, of course, is when the federal government decided to reduce its support in Manitoba as a percentage basis and are now paying less than 20 per cent of the costs of health care in Manitoba. The member opposite didn't stand up in this House and demand consultations at that point, Madam Speaker.

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

Primary Health-Care Services Funding Government Intent

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, no one in the Corydon primary-care area was consulted.

Primary health care strives to prevent disease, to promote well-being and to give primary physical and mental health care to people of all ages directly in the community.

Not only is the government closing Corydon primary care, it has also cut 65 per cent from the primary-care budget, as shown on page 47, which I table, from the annual report of Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living.

Can the Health Minister please explain his decision to cut back on primary care: Why does the minister give primary care such a low priority?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Of course, primary care is a priority for this government, and those who provide primary care, as well, Madam Speaker, not just in Winnipeg, but across Manitoba. We are pleased that those who provide primary-care-doctors—in Manitoba are continuing to vote with their feet.

We are pleased, as a government, to join with regional health authorities across Manitoba to announce that there were new doctors that are coming to Manitoba: there were 16 that are coming to southern, there are 22 coming to the Prairie Mountain regional health authority, there are 22 new ones coming to the IERHA. In fact, there are 80 more doctors this year than there were last year. That number continues to go up.

We continue to support doctors. They continue to see this as a good place to practise in Canada, Madam Speaker.

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

Preventative Health-Care Funding Government Intent

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, today, on World Mental Health Day, despite receiving millions more in dollars this year from the federal government, Manitoba still does not have a brain and mental health strategy.

In recent months, this government has cut preventive health initiatives by cancelling vital programs like the Metis health program and the Islamic social services support, by reducing physiotherapy and occupational therapy, by shutting down the Mature Women's Centre and removing lactation specialists, by cutting funding to the Aboriginal and Northern Health Office by 57 per cent.

Why is this government cutting dollars for preventing physical and mental illness when these cuts will lead to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): The member may know, or at least he should know, that there is almost \$500 million more being invested in health care in Manitoba by the provincial government this year than there was last year. That is an increase of almost half a billion dollars, Madam Speaker. That is a record level of support for health care in Manitoba.

Now, let's compare that to the federal government's commitment, where they decided to reduce, by \$2.2 million, the amount of support under the former formula, Madam Speaker.

That member who speaks loudly in the House now, that member who goes to the front of the

Legislature and holds a bullhorn with any rally that he sees, didn't say anything when the federal Liberal government was making that cut. He sat quiet in his seat. He shouldn't stand up now, Madam Speaker.

Agricultural Irrigation Strategy Support of Tile Drainage

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Our government recognizes that we must take a balanced approach to water management and to work to improve water quality in Manitoba. As part of this approach, we know that agricultural innovations and new technologies such as tile drainage can deliver a wide range of benefits for farmers. It can help prevent standing surface water, allow farmers to store subsurface water to help during dry spells and to help control runoff from heavy rains.

Can the Minister of Agriculture please update this House on steps that our government is taking to support the responsible growth and the usage of tile drainage in Manitoba?

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

We recognize that tile drainage and data has shown that excess moisture accounts for the majority of crop losses. Tile drainage helps to improve a consistent crop and delivers higher returns, and we as a government are taking this very seriously.

That is why our government has launched public consultations in this past summer to obtain feedback on these strategies and initiatives. We are listening to Manitoba farmers and Manitobans. We will continue to find the right balance for all.

Port of Churchill Provision of Essential Supplies

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): For the sake of the people of Churchill, I'm thankful that a shipment of propane might actually be arriving there soon. Churchill and other northern communities, however, would be more thankful if that shipment was arriving by rail. We learned this weekend that bureaucratic squabbling between the province and OmniTRAX nearly derailed efforts to deliver the propane.

When is this government going to quit playing politics and work with northern communities to make sure northern communities get their winter supplies?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): We know that there are a lot of challenges currently

with Churchill, and I'm not too sure that trying to throw the hardworking officials from EMO in my department under the bus is the right way to proceed. In fact, I would encourage members opposite to join with us in challenging the federal government to stand up to their constitutional obligations to deal with the port and with the railway.

And let's find an appropriate solution to both of those.

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

Government Funding Commitment

Mr. Lindsey: Perhaps the minister hasn't been paying attention, but I have been asking the federal government to step up as well.

But right now, I'm talking to this government, whose Premier (Mr. Pallister) refused to say what his \$500-million commitment to Churchill that's spread over 10 years would be spent on. Whether it's new money, existing money, nobody knows. According to a small-business owner in Churchill, most of that money is already spoken for to cover normal expenses.

Will the Premier make it clear whether he's committing any new money and, if so, where is it going?

Mr. Schuler: I would again like to thank those officials from emergency measures and from other departments within our government—those same officials that the member opposite threw under the bus—for the kind of work that they did in ensuring that propane was going to be readily available in Churchill.

And they have done so. In fact, the ship will be arriving shortly—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —the propane will arrive in containers. The containers will be unloaded, and there will be ample supply of propane. This is a success story on behalf of the officials that work for our department, Madam Speaker, to ensure that the people of Churchill will have sufficient propane right into spring of next year.

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

Hudson Bay Rail Line Repair

Mr. Lindsey: The minister has a funny idea of what success is.

Employment insurance benefits are running out, businesses are hurting, costs are soaring, people are starting to look at moving away. Are we going to make it? Madam Speaker, that's the question that Dave Danley [*phonetic*], a small-business owner and chamber of commerce president—is asking.

Instead of pointing fingers at the federal government, will this Premier commit to the people of Churchill that he will ensure that the rail line will run before winter sets in?

Mr. Schuler: Well, Madam Speaker, there was a need to make sure that we would have enough propane in Churchill all the way through winter and into spring, and we have ensured that's going to take place. I would suggest to this House that that is a success.

We also had to make sure that there would be enough jet fuel up there in Churchill so that we can ensure that flights would continue to go up to Churchill. Madam Speaker, that's been taken care of. I'd say that that's a success.

We're also going to ensure that there's enough gasoline up in Churchill, Madam Speaker, to take us through until spring.

And, Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to members opposite, there is a constitutional obligation on behalf of the federal government to take care of railways and ports, and we are going to hold the federal government to stand up to their obligations. And I'd ask members opposite to join us.

*(14:30)

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Ecological Reserves Status

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Wondering if the minister could please inform the House as to the status of Manitoba's ecological reserves. Thank you.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): It is an honour to rise—my first opportunity to rise in this House as the Minister of Sustainable Development and, of course, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the hard-working women and men in my department and throughout this province who are committed to our

natural resources and conservation efforts in this province.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: I'm wondering if the minister could please inform Manitobans what the status is of Manitoba's ecological reserves.

Ms. Squires: I'm very happy to share with this House that we have many hard-working people in our department that are very committed to working towards enhancing the percentage of ecological reserves. That is something that our government is committed to.

We're using a science-based approach to guide all of our decisions in Sustainable Development, unlike members opposite who failed to listen to scientists and allowed Lake Winnipeg to become, you know, the most threatened lake in the world under their watch. We're going to take a science-based approach to ensuring that all our natural resources are protected.

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

Bill 24

Ecological Reserves Report Cancellation

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I want to quote from Bill 24. It says: “The Ecological Reserves Act: A requirement to provide a report on ecological reserves every five years is removed.” This is the minister's own legislation, Bill 24, which we will be debating this afternoon.

How on earth can she expect anyone to believe her government cares about the status of ecological reserves when her own government, her own legislation, is going to avoid public accountability and trash the legislation that helps protect those rare and endangered ecosystems in Manitoba?

Thank you.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Nothing new over there, Madam Speaker. It's déjà vu all over again in spite of the leadership change. Here we go. Here we go from a—the former government never failed to set a target they failed to reach when it came to protecting our environment. They set targets—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: They found out they couldn't achieve them.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: They changed the mechanisms for keeping score, Madam Speaker.

They have absolutely no record to stand on when it comes to protecting this environment that we all treasure and value so much on this side of the House. We care about it so much—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —we got a made-in-Manitoba green plan that's going to make sure that our environmental and economic goals are measured and achieved, Madam Speaker, as opposed to neither of those two things happening under the previous administration.

The member should apologize for his comments, Madam Speaker, he really should.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: Petitions? Are there any petitions?

Taxi Industry Regulation

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer

jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed, many concerned citizens.

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

Further petitions?

Seven Oaks General Hospital Emergency Room

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government has announced the closures of three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg, including closing down the emergency room at Seven Oaks General Hospital.

(2) The closures come on the heels of the closing of a nearby QuickCare clinic, as well as cancelled plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes, such as Park Manor, that would have provided important services for families and seniors in the area.

(3) The closures have left families and seniors in north Winnipeg without any point of contact with front-line health-care services and will result in them having to travel 20 minutes or more to St. Boniface

Hospital's emergency room or Health Sciences Centre emergency room for emergency care.

(4) These cuts will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in north Winnipeg and visit the emergency room frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or are low-income.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Seven Oaks General Hospital's emergency room so that families and seniors in north Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health-care services.

This petition was signed by Tes Aguilar, Satnam Raur and Yasdeep Blev.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I—in accordance with the 38—rule 38(1), I move, seconded by the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher), that the regulatory—regularly scheduled business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, removing unjust provincial requirements for class 1F driver certification.

Thank you.

* (14:40)

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for The Maples have leave to offer comments regarding the urgency of the motion and—oh. Oh. *[interjection]* Okay, just proceed?

The honourable member for The Maples.

Mr. Saran: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Manitoba Public Insurance recently issued a notice to many existing class 1F drivers in The Maples area to reappear for class 1F driver's licence certification tests. The notice reads that the drivers

must undergo fresh road tests in Manitoba to receive the same Manitoba licence. The notice, with a short deadline for the road test and threat to penalize the recipients should they become unable to comply with the directive, caused considerable concern and fear among the drivers.

The background of the issue is that the drivers moved from Winnipeg to Ontario, but later returned to Manitoba. When in Ontario, they received an Ontario class A driver's licence. Upon return, they submitted those licences to Manitoba Public Insurance and received Manitoba class 1F driver's licences in exchange two years ago.

This is something to be noticed, Madam Speaker. People had their licence two years ago. Now they're asking—they are being asked to be retested. Where is the logic?

The letters appear to the drivers as an unjust and improper intimidation practice of the MPI. This is because the MPI never informed them beforehand that they might require undergoing additional road tests. Nothing is mentioned about such practices on the MPI website either. They ask, why MPI did not contact them—with them after receiving a licence immediately and driving for a considerable period of time?

In a word, the MPI notice failed to convince them that this sudden action is for road safety and not MPI's undue revenue generation strategy.

I, on behalf of the class 1F driver's licence, request you to grant this motion and start further discussion.

The problem here is that, Madam Speaker, these people—I think, sometimes, people born here, they don't understand the situation people will come from the other countries. They have to immediately start working; does not matter what their occupation was back there, they have to get some kind of job. They come over here, immediately in Manitoba they write first class—try to write the first-class licence test.

Because of language difficulties, and because of other languages not available for first class—I know class for fifths are those with languages are available—you can write your test in other languages for class 5. But class 1, you cannot do that. And when you are a newcomer, there are differences of—different words could mean different to different people. It's hard for those people. So they—if they write or try once and they fail, if they go to other provinces their—where their licences—there's a

possibility available, so they go to Ontario. On one hand, you have tests in English, but on the other hand, you can look at the question in Punjabi or in Hindi or whatever other language you want to write in. It means you are able to understand the questions, you can properly answer those questions.

And over here, you go on a computer once and you make a mistake, you cannot go back. Over there, you can write on paper, you can think about that, and you can correct your question. So because of ease over there—it's not cheating—it's because of ease over there, that's why those people go over there.

There is also other factors there. Over here it used to cost about \$5,000, \$4,000, to get training, practical training, but over there, it was only \$1,200. If you have your own relative over there you don't have to pay any rent. You will stay with them. You will have your licence, you will come back and that licence will be used to be change it to class 1. Those people has been driving those trucks for two years. Now I don't know where they got this idea; now they wanted to—they to rewrite their test, go through their test.

It's an insult to those people. It's an insult to—especially immigrants. I don't know when these people will start understanding that immigrants go through a tough time when they come over here. They have a very hard time to adjust. They go for any job they can get. They want to get—they don't want to go on welfare. They don't want to go social assistance. I think these people should appreciate. When I questioned this, I said, how come you are doing this? Oh, they are circumventing the licence to get licence over here. I think that's an insult to the drivers.

We must—I said, well, if the licences from Ontario are not the right ones, are the false ones, why don't MPI send their inspector on the border and ask them to—any of them—any—track them, come from Ontario, send them back because they are dangerous over here.

Where is the logic? There is no logic at all. I—again, it happened about a year ago and the same thing, but at that time I think the minister listened. But now the problem is that they never put on the website that if you go to somewhere else you have come back over here you have to rewrite, you have to do it. Then people could have talked about that, but they let them do it.

Now they came over here. Now they're asking them to redo it. That's really an insult to, especially immigrant community. I ask the minister to make sure he talks to MPIE. I tried to have a meeting with the minister and I could not get a meeting. Then I tried to, send me your decision in writing. They will only phone you; they won't send a decision in writing. That's again—they can change whatever they said. That's again an insult on an elected MLA for the constituency for the people. And when I was minister, any MLA from the opposition, when they came to me I sat with them; I try to solve the problem.

But in this case, when the Uber issue, I try to get a meeting with the present minister, tried to get with the minister responsible for that, tried to get a meeting with the Premier (Mr. Pallister). They never gave me that meeting. Similarly, again, I tried to have a meeting with the Minister for MPIE, and they say, oh, we are not going to have a meeting. I said, okay I bring a couple truck drivers; they can explain you. No, no, we don't want to see them.

These people are elected by the people and they don't want to see people. I am elected by the people. They want—don't want to see—meet their own people [*inaudible*] That's really an insult to the democracy. I think they should think about twice before they take this kind of action.

Madam Speaker, I think before—what will happen, those drivers are not going to write their tests. They will go to the court. They—it will cost them quite a bit of money. Similarly, it will cost taxpayers money. It's very easy to say, I'm not going to see anybody. It's really something when the minister is—should reply or should tell to the taxpayer why he invest in that money? Why he let those truck drivers to waste their money? Those truck drivers already have been working for the last two years, and some of them even don't have any accidents at all and they have a good record. And some of them even didn't really go to—had their road licence over here, then—test over here, then went to Ontario. They simply went to Ontario, wrote the test, came back.

So all this in—just in a single letter without understanding I have about 30 letters from the different truck drivers, and those letters mean something. They should look at there.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (14:50)

Madam Speaker: I should remind all members that under rule 38(2), the mover of the motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other recognized parties in the House are allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I have a few points to raise with regard to the urgency—

Madam Speaker: I would point out to the member that he would have to seek leave to speak to the urgent—

Mr. Gerrard: I ask leave to speak to the matter of urgent public importance.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to offer comments regarding the urgency of the motion and other opportunities for debate? Leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: I will not be long, but I have a few comments which I think are 'worky'—worthy of putting on the record.

No, this is, I believe, urgent in part because it deals with immigrants who are relatively new to Manitoba who are struggling and need some attention. They should not be forgotten, they should not be put to the side.

We have a government which is talking about reducing red tape, but it seems to be increasing red tape for some people. That's not right.

We have a government and ministers who appear to be in hiding and lack accountability, have no interest in solving problems, no interest in welcoming people here to Manitoba.

These are urgent issues when we are dealing with immigrants coming here who are struggling, who are hard-working, who need some help. And we are a centre for truck drivers and for the trucking industry. And we should be welcoming people who

are in the trucking business and the trucking industry.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. That's what I wanted to say.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): I do appreciate the members opposite raising this issue.

Certainly, I'm aware of the issue. And it's been an issue that Manitoba Public Insurance have been monitoring for quite some time. And I know there's about a—70 individual cases that Manitoba Public Insurance have been monitoring. And what has happened, Madam Speaker, is that these individuals have taken the class 1 driver's for semi-trailer units here in Manitoba and then subsequently did not pass in Manitoba. And from there they went out to Ontario and took the course there. And they were able to get the course and the licensing out in Ontario. And then a lot of these individuals returned back home to Manitoba—in fact, without necessarily even changing addresses.

So clearly this is a little bit around the rules of what the intent is in terms of driver licensing in Manitoba—and, quite frankly, in other jurisdictions, as well.

So those are the kind of questions that MPI has had around this practice. And our view was that, potentially, some of the driver testing in Ontario may have had imperfections, we'll call it. And we weren't sure that the testing that was being done in Ontario were measuring up to Manitoba standards.

As a result of these discussions with Manitoba Public Insurance and Ontario, Ontario has now taken a more stricter stance in terms of their driver licensing. So Ontario are currently going through changes to their driver licensing standards across the province there. So we're certainly cognizant of the fact this is an important issue, and it's a very important safety issue, as well, and Manitoba Public Insurance and, certainly, our government recognize it as being an important safety issue. We clearly want to make sure that individuals do have the proper training and the ability to safely navigate these large pieces of equipment on the road.

And it certainly is a safety issue not just here in Manitoba but, Madam Speaker, you will be well aware that these long-haul truckers could be travelling throughout North America. And we want to make sure the motoring public is safe at all times.

Now, in regard to this specific situation, you know, Manitoba Public Insurance made these individuals aware of the situation, the concerns they had around the issuing of licences, and there was certainly an extension time provided to get these people back in to make sure that they were qualified to drive semi-trailers, and they did extend this over a period of time.

And I will point out, Madam Speaker, we certainly don't want many more truck drivers on the road, and we don't want to stand in the way of having truck drivers getting registered and licensed here in Manitoba. In fact, Manitoba Public Insurance allow testing in 26 languages—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would indicate to the member that when rising on a matter of urgent public matter that the member speak to the urgency of whether or not this debate should go forward and not get into the subject of the matter and debate of the matter, but only speak to the urgency of whether or not we should go forward with an urgent debate. So I would ask the member to keep his remarks as closely to that as possible.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and to that, I was building the case to the point where Manitoba Public Insurance has made changes and made allowances to accommodate these individuals to get retesting done. They do allow testing in 26 languages. Punjabi is one, and certainly in communication with those individuals, we're hoping they will come forward and make sure that they take the test as Manitoba Public Insurance has allowed.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): In respect of whether or not the member's point, or MUPI, is of urgent public importance, I would suggest to the Speaker that while it is a very important issue that should be explored, I would suggest that it's not a matter of urgent public importance at this particular moment. We actually have a lot of really important work to do in a very limited time this afternoon, including debating Bill 31, The advanced education administrative act, and also Bill 30, which is the vehicle for hire act, which—Madam Speaker, we do have members in the audience—or in the gallery today that I'm sure would appreciate a really—a robust debate on Bill 30.

So I would suggest to the Speaker, most respectfully, that this is not an urgent matter at this particular moment and not to proceed with this, and if we can get on with the business of the day. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on the motion proposed by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran). The notice required by rule 38(1) was provided. Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward. Although the subject matter is one that some Manitobans could be concerned with, I do not believe the public interest will suffer if the issue is not debated today. I would also note that there are other opportunities available to raise concerns regarding this issue, such as asking questions in oral question period, making members' statements and asking questions during the Estimates process.

In addition, there is a requirement in our rules that, this afternoon, the House is obligated to complete consideration of the designated bills, and this must be a priority for the House over other business according to the rules.

With the greatest of respect, I therefore rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

The honourable government—Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): On House business, I am tabling a revised version of the Estimates sequence made necessary due to the recent Cabinet shuffle and the subsequent tabling of the restated Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue.

Mr. Cullen: Additionally, Madam Speaker, if you would call Bill 31 and Bill 30.

* (15:00)

SECOND READINGS

Bill 31—The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will now consider second reading of the following bills: Bill 31 and Bill 30, starting with

Bill 31, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler), that The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wishart: It's a pleasure to rise on second reading of this bill. This proposed bill would amend The Advanced Education Administration Act to repeal the existing provisions for university tuitions and fees, and by introducing an—the changes to tuition control. So legislation will be—will serve to strengthen Manitoba's post-secondary education system, and we have been working very constructively with our post-secondary institutions to work towards a stronger system that will provide better education for Manitoba's post-secondary students now and into the future.

This bill would limit tuition increases to an annual rate of 5 per cent plus the consumer price index, providing a level of predictability moving forward for a number of years into the future as we are quite significantly lower than most of other institutions when it comes to tuition.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The amendment also provides the Province with the ability to reduce grants to universities if the average tuition fees in Manitoba are not the lowest of the western provinces. And we have chosen to work with the western provincial averages. Those institution's most carefully or most closely reflect the situation here in Manitoba and the end result would be, at some point in the future and we can't give a specific year because we don't know what the other institutions might do in the interim. We would end up always with the lowest cost tuition of any province in western Canada, and I think that that's a significant target to work towards and provides some assurance and some predictability for students. And they can make their choice based on the quality of the institutions that they have available for the course that they choose now and into the future.

And we certainly want to improve and keep up with our neighbours when it comes to the quality of the courses being offered now and into the future. It is not always about numbers. It is about quality of education, and even when you look at numbers we

know that we are falling further and further behind other provinces when it comes to the number of people that—in our province that have a post-secondary education. So we need to move forward.

In line with our province's—our government's focus on red tape reduction, this bill also removes the unnecessary administrative process for reviewing course-related fees. There is over 300 course-related fees that we have to review on an annual basis related to this, some of them as low as \$3 per course which—a very minor cost, and can be as high as \$26,000. Those usually are in areas of medicine or dentistry and very often are associated with materials that are provided that the student can use for many, many years in their practice.

So those are kind of a one-of, but we do review these on an annual basis—over 300 of them is quite an onerous thing. And over the years we look back and see how many times there has been changes, we find that, in fact, we're not making changes, that the universities, the post-secondary institutions have been very reasonable and realistic in their request for course-related fees.

We do know that when you look at other provinces that have made significant attempts to try and keep their tuition low, their course-related fees have risen astronomically. It becomes another door into moving the cost over. These changes will allow universities improve their competitiveness in the long term while ensuring that tuition remains affordable for Manitoba students now and into the future, and is predictable going on into the future.

This bill is, however, part of a broader strategy for post-secondary education in this province. Our government has already introduced new investments into scholarships and bursaries and significant changes to student financial assistance programs, and there is more to come in the future.

I know that many in this House have heard me talk about the significant changes we have made to Scholarship and Bursary Initiative in Manitoba where we provide additional dollars into the program. And we've also worked with private industry to change the matching ratio which was one to one, now to two to one, and we have—and I'm told by the post-secondary institutions that has gone over very well and they have had quite significant co-operation from the private industry in—related to that, and many private industry people, of course. No one appreciates the significant value of a post-secondary education to themselves and to Manitoba in general.

We've also worked with the post-secondary institutions to change the nature of the money as it goes into endowments and endowments will still continue well into the future. But previously, money was matched and then put into the endowment, so the only dollars that were available to students on an annual basis came out of the endowment. And these days with relatively low rates of return from many of these endowments, that did not make a significant hole in terms of providing additional dollars to students. Instead, we're matching it when the money comes out of the endowments and that has a much-greater impact in terms of multiplying the dollars.

Accordingly, we have changed what was usually in the neighbourhood of \$4 million on an annual basis in scholarships and bursary initiatives to \$20 million that's available on an annual basis to support students in Manitoba. And we've changed the nature of how that is targeted, as well. It is not based on just merit or marks, it is now based on need in a significant way. And that will provide access to those that are in the low-income end of the scale. That in conjunction with the changes to the federal program, actually, have provided a very significant hand up to those that have low income and yet still wish to achieve a college education—a college or a university education, sorry—and has made a significant difference. And though we do not yet have numbers of—the resulting numbers from this year because the deadline was just last week for it—for these, we do know that we've had an increase in the number of applications. And that is a very positive sign in terms of helping students achieve what they need, and that's certainly what we're—our government is coming from.

These new investments are targeted, as I said, to low-income students, ensuring that the changes in tuition will not have a significant impact on accessibility to post-secondaries.

Our universities are an important part of our province. They're a cornerstone serving—strengthening our economy through education, innovation and research. And we also know that it improves the success rate and many aspects of the individual student during their lifetime when they get a post-secondary education. It becomes valuable not only to the province, but it becomes valuable to the individual as well.

And we know that on an ongoing basis we have—currently funding about 60 per cent of the cost of post-secondary educations—as government—at

universities, which is certainly more than in line with many other provinces, and when you look around the world is considered quite a significant deal in terms of the support that we provide.

We also know that we're getting increasing number of foreign students here in Manitoba who—in looking around the world and looking at what tuitions are costing and deciding that our jurisdiction is a very economical one.

* (15:10)

And, certainly, though, this particular legislation has no impact on foreign students, it certainly—very often their tuition is a multiple of what domestic students pay so that this, very likely, will have a significant role in stabilizing the tuition for international students as well.

Universities are important part of our society. They support the cultural and social fabric as well, and certainly, they're the place where a lot of innovative ideas come out of. So we certainly want universities and post-secondary institutions to grow and become stronger, and the stronger they are, the better we all are for it.

This bill, along with our other post-secondary initiative, strikes a better balance, we believe, in terms of investment from public sector, from students and from private sector in terms of the support that they provide through the scholarship and bursary initiatives.

The—that—and all of these agencies benefit, including the individual and, of course, us as a society, and as well as the private sector in terms of the quality of people that are available to them in the workplace. And that's very often a very important limiting factor. And we certainly have heard repeatedly from them that there's—is a growing demand for more technically trained students, as well as students that have innovative ideas, and they don't always come from the same sector. And, certainly, we want to make sure that we provide all sectors with some opportunity.

Universities have told our government many times that the current tuition cap created a major challenge in terms of financial and fiscal sustainability for the post-secondary institution. So we have listened to them, and we have listened to students, including Canadian Federation of Students, who have told us very clearly in the past that they wanted supports up front, not many years down the

road. And so we have listened to them, and the support that we are providing is, in fact, up front.

This bill is part of our overall post-secondary education strategy that will provide institutions with greater flexibility and reduce their administrative burden, but it will also provide university students with some predictability as to what tuitions will be now and into the future.

Ensuring that students 'faishing' financial burdens receive significant assistance will certainly be a big part of our long-term strategy, and we look forward to making sure that we are providing adequate levels of support and that we are encouraging more students to attend post-secondary institutions, because that is important for our province and our government now and into the future.

We are pleased to introduce this bill. We believe it will become a significant part of growing our post-secondary education and making sure that students have access to a quality post-secondary education, that there is a long-term strategy in place that helps our post-secondary institutions plan now and into the future and grow not only the quality of their education, but the numbers of education—of spots that are available for post-secondary education, and we look forward to the passage of this bill.

Questions

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

Time for questions; is there any questions? No? Okay.

So, debate's open.

Debate

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Quite an honour to rise this afternoon, finally, on this very important piece of legislation brought forward by the government. But first, before I do have an opportunity to put some words on the record, I just wanted to acknowledge that this is my first time having an opportunity to rise as the new Education critic for the official opposition, certainly a role that I

take very seriously, a role that I recognize I have lots to learn about and always more to learn in terms of understanding how best to represent the people of Manitoba in this role. But I certainly undertake that seriously, and I look forward to having that opportunity in this House.

This being my first opportunity to rise, it's on a very unfortunate piece of legislation, quite frankly, and I guess I would start by saying that it's unfortunate that, despite two days of students from across Manitoba coming to this Legislature, you know, filling the galleries, filling the hallways of this Legislature, standing on the front steps of this Legislature to send a clear message to this government about this bill, we now get to it here in an afternoon sort of sandwiched between other important business.

And I know there's folks in the gallery here to listen to debate about further bills, so I feel my time is very limited, so I will keep my remarks quite short, though I can assure the House that we will continue to bring forward our opposition to this bill. We will continue to work with students, with parents when they bring their concerns forward in the Legislature in the form of committee and being present here in the gallery, again, to send that clear message to this government about how much Manitobans care about post-secondary education and keeping it affordable and accessible to all Manitobans.

You know, just a few words, as I said, Mr. Speaker, because I am very limited in my time, and I do want to get to debate of other bills before the House, but this particular piece of legislation has a real impact on the accessibility of post-secondary education in this province. And I would venture to say that if you polled every single member in this House and you talked to every single member, I know for sure the members on the opposition side would certainly agree that post-secondary education is a key to the future of this province; it's a key to the success of our province and the students within it. So it's certainly a priority of ours, and when the government makes it less accessible to everybody, I think it certainly sends a very clear message about their priorities, and we certainly seen the—this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) priorities over the past year. And we know that his priorities are about, you know, one line in the ledger, one specific line, not the whole picture, not the whole picture of the province, not the future of our province, but one specific line in the ledger.

And what he's proposing in this legislation is to, in fact, allow for the downloading of costs onto the backs of students, and it's allowing post-secondary education to be off-loaded from the government's responsibility to those who can afford it and those who can pay for it, and I think that that's just not the right direction that we should be taking. You know, when this minister talks about how the bill removes restrictions on course-related fees—what he calls red tape—you know, he says that it's too onerous to control and to regulate those course-related fees, and then goes on to say that they're so high and talks about how high those costs are—astronomical in some cases, he says, but allows them nonetheless, with this piece of legislation, to climb even higher without any kind of restrictions. We know this bill allows for 5 per cent increase in tuition, including, of course, on top of that, the rate of inflation, meaning that students could be paying up to 7 per cent more just in their basic tuition, and we know that this is—also deregulates ancillary fees, additional fees that are imposed by the university, which, again, can add to the overall cost. What this means, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, is a less accessible education, post-secondary education system for Manitobans.

Now, for myself, you know, I was fortunate enough to be able to study here in Manitoba, to receive my degree here in Manitoba. It was only because of the affordability of post-secondary education in this province that I was allowed to get that quality, competitive and affordable degree that I managed to study for. And it was certainly because of that degree that I was able, then, to establish my family here in Manitoba, build a future for myself and begin to give back to my community, and I think that's a fine model for any Manitoban who is looking for a place where we value that post-secondary education, but we also understand that it has to be accessible to absolutely everybody in this province and not just for a very select few.

* (15:20)

The other piece that certainly I understood when I was receiving my degree, and I know others had brought to my attention, is the understanding and the deal that Manitoba students understood with regards to staying in this province and continuing to contribute and how the post-secondary education rebate plays a part in that picture.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, and as I said, I understand my time is very limited, the point that I'd like to make here in this Chamber this afternoon—

again, as sort of the beginning of this conversation in terms of this bill going forward and us bringing this to public consultations and allowing the public to have their say, because I'm sure they will be able to give us a better on-the-ground experience so to speak, and I value that and that opportunity to listen to the public—what we hear time and time again from students is that this government is taking away services, it's taking away educational opportunities from them and from their children in the case of parents here in Manitoban, and at the same time off-loading costs and asking them to pay more.

And we just don't think that that's right, Mr. Speaker. We don't think that that's a progressive or a clear vision for this province. We certainly stand with students who want affordable education in this province. We stand with parents who are concerned about their children and their ability to get an education in this province and stay here and contribute to the future of Manitoba. We will continue to stand with them as this bill goes forward. And we will continue to stand in opposition to this government's cuts and this government's off-loading of costs onto students at every step. We will be there with Manitobans against this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further—any further speakers?

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Many teachers, professors, students, staff and support workers have come out against increases in tuition rates. When so many of those who work directly in the field of education and those pursuing education themselves are against rising tuition, at what point does this Pallister government realize that raising tuitions is not what Manitobans want? They have protested repeatedly, hoping for this government to hear their voices—actually, not just to hear their voices, but to actually do as requested by them, keeping education affordable.

Investing in education is investing in the future of our province. I'm a prime example of that. Keeping education affordable not only incentivizes higher education, but can attract bright and intelligent students from other provinces and abroad to work and study in our province. Our low-cost education has been a virtue for the people of this province and those who wish to study here. We are already seeing our students struggle; those are supposed to be our future leaders, doctors, academics and lawyers.

Bill 31 does not support or incentivize students to pursue the types of degrees in areas that we critically need. Instead, we are likely to see more students rely upon the already stressed university food bank system. I'm sure the members opposite don't even know where the locations are of food banks in their universities. We should never find out ourselves by—find ourselves going back to a time in history when education and university was only for the wealthy.

Increasing student debt for those that rely upon student loans will only hold them back upon their graduation. They should be finding themselves able to invest in homes or in their future or even families. Students after graduation would likely find themselves paying off their education for more years than what we are seeing now.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Our province needs people to invest in our economy. Our future leaders and entrepreneurs cannot do that if most of their money is being stripped away in repaying student loans. Our students are already stressed enough without having to worry if university is affordable, even after they graduate. Many students are working to pay their cost of living while attending university, often on low-paying and minimum wage jobs. Again, I am an example of that. They should not be told that they can pursue—they cannot pursue their dreams simply because they cannot afford a higher cost of post-secondary education.

Financial cost is one of the highest considerations people make when deciding whether or not to go to a post-secondary institution. This is only truer for those from less fortunate or from lower socio-economic backgrounds than others. Higher tuition rates can lead to decreased enrollment from our province's most disadvantaged population, people who would benefit most from the higher education. People may come to find a quality education and their dreams of fleeing poverty out of reach.

Madam Speaker, it is with great caution that any increase in tuition rates should be considered. The negative impacts on students' financial, emotional and mental well-being by quick, sudden, and large increases in tuition can be too much to bear for students in Manitoba.

While this government aims to increase bursaries and scholarships, there is no guarantee that

such measures will aid those who are struggling or who can no longer afford to go to school. Our caucus will always oppose measures that make education unattainable and inaccessible for the most vulnerable in our province.

Our caucus stands against Bill 31.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 30—The Local Vehicles for Hire Act

Madam Speaker: Moving now to Bill 30, The Local Vehicles for Hire Act, the honourable Minister of Municipal Relations.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 30, The Local Vehicles for Hire Act, be now read for a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wharton: And I'd like to, of course, thank the House for taking the time to debate this bill today.

The Local Vehicles for Hire Act would devolve oversight of the taxicab industry in the City of Winnipeg to municipal government bringing the City in line with other municipalities in the province and other major cities.

These changes will pave the way for modernization in Winnipeg's vehicles-for-hire industry and a fresh start regulatory regime that can be designed to meet local interests right across the province.

The Taxicab Act was created in 1935 when horses were still a conventional use of transportation. The act created the taxicab board to settle disputes between 13 different municipalities that made up present day Winnipeg.

Winnipeg's amalgamation would have been a logical time to transfer regulations to the City according to Meyers Norris Penny. Instead, we remain the only province in Canada to regulate the vehicles-for-hire industry for its capital city.

Years of reports, commissions, inquiries and new regulations have created a regime riddled in red tape and a provincial inaction has fostered an

industry that is not serving the modern needs of a major city like Winnipeg.

To their credit the NDP recognized that the existing regulatory regime was not working. That's why the former NDP government commissioned an unprecedented review of the Winnipeg vehicles-for-hire industry by Meyers Norris Penny. MNP conducted consultations with taxicab owners, drivers, dispatchers, companies, members of the public, businesses and organizations that rely on taxicabs. More than 10,000 Manitobans provided feedback, including 675 taxicab drivers and licence owners.

This culminated in the final report by MNP which makes it clear that the current system needs modernization and improvement.

Madam Speaker, here are the facts: Winnipeg has not seen a new standard taxicab licence issued in two decades. The taxicab board has maintained the number of standard taxicab licences at about 400 since 1947. At one taxicab for every 1,555 people, Winnipeg's ratio of taxicabs to population is lower than any other compared city.

*(15:30)

Drivers are concerned about their working conditions as well as artificially high values on secondary markets that limit new owner participation. Consumers are concerned about wait times; 54 per cent indicated that they have waited too long for a taxicab to arrive. And the Winnipeg Airports Authority has indicated that the shortage of cabs at the airport is common.

A clear consensus emerged during these consultations: people want and need choice. They want better services and lower-cost options, and they want the option of ride-sharing companies. Madam Speaker, we have heard from Manitobans and we are taking action.

While the MNP report contains a number of recommendations for modernizing the industry, it asks the Province to determine whether regulatory structure is best served at the municipal or provincial level. The proposed Local Vehicles for Hire Act recognizes that the municipal level of government is best positioned to address local needs, including determining future directions of vehicle-for-hire industry.

The act would devolve oversight of the taxicab industry in the city of Winnipeg to the municipal

government bringing the city in line with other municipalities in the province and other major Canadian cities. The act provides municipalities with specific powers to make bylaws regulating vehicles for hire such as taxis, limousines and other vehicles. Municipalities will make decisions on licences, safety standards for vehicles, driver standards, and fees and fares along with other matters.

This is a big opportunity to do things better. Municipal jurisdiction can help ensure that the vehicle-for-hire industry is integrated into municipal transportation strategies and can help ensure the regulations work in harmony with long-term plans for transit, vehicle and other transportation infrastructure.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, the MNP report advises that the municipalities are better positioned to co-ordinate with police services, customer contact systems like 311, parking and bylaw enforcement. It also said that municipal jurisdictions would enable Winnipeg to enable support of vehicle-for-hire industry that meets its particular needs.

Since tabling this legislation, we have continued to hear from Manitobans who believe that local decisions making—local decision making works best in—when it comes to vehicle for hire, pardon me, that includes the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Madam Speaker, which said that, I quote, putting a regulation in the industry into the hands of municipalities where the industry takes place is a wise choice. Madam Speaker, we agree.

Under the act, people who hold existing businesses and drivers' licences issued by the Province will be automatically issued new licences. The act also enables municipalities to create bylaws to allow operation of ride-sharing companies. We recognize that bylaws already exist in many communities including Portage, Selkirk and Brandon. These existing municipal bylaws would remain in force.

To further facilitate local decision making, this bill will eliminate the Manitoba Taxicab Board and remove the Manitoba transport board jurisdiction over inter-municipal trips. Municipalities will have specific tools to consider the full suite of options when planning for transportation needs in their communities, and trips between municipalities will be governed by applicable bylaws in the jurisdiction where the trip originated.

Madam Speaker, the act also ensures that in the absence of a bylaw governing taxicabs and other vehicles for hire, existing provincial legislation will remain in place until the act is proclaimed February 28th, 2018. This time will provide the community a smooth transition period for the industry and its customers.

Madam Speaker, our government continues to work hard on behalf of Manitobans to repair the services they rely on in their communities. The Local Vehicles for Hire Act represents another important step forward. This is an opportunity for a clean slate. Winnipeg and all other municipalities will have the powers necessary to create a modern regulatory regime designed to best meet their local needs and interests.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the debate and passage of this important legislation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

The honourable member for Tyndall Park. No?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I have a question for the minister on this bill. It deals with the nature of the delegation to City of Winnipeg: Will the province ensure that there is some fair treatment of taxi drivers and will the province enable some level of compensation for people who are really adversely affected by these changes?

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

This is an opportunity for a clean slate, Madam Speaker. Winnipeg will have the powers necessary to create a modern regulatory regime designed to better serve, of course, the interests of all Winnipeggers.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, the cost of accessible transportation, the capital cost for vehicles, the time for transport are all quite expensive. People have made investments.

Now, it's quite possible these ride-sharing services will undermine those investments and the customer base while, at the same time, these ride-sharing companies have no obligation to provide accessible transportation where companies do.

How does the minister reconcile this with the human rights act, the accessibility act, the labour act—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wharton: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

Again, reiterating, we remain the only province in Canada that regulates the taxicab industry in its capital city, and the Meyers Norris Penny report recommended significantly modernizing regulations and streamlining—streamlining oversight within the industry.

I think the member would agree that it's time for a change when it comes to the ride-share industry.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Have there been any discussions with the City of Winnipeg about the regulations that would—they would put in place?

Mr. Wharton: Thank the member for the question.

As a matter of fact, this is exactly what this bill will do. It'll transfer over to the City of Winnipeg the opportunity to develop a bylaw that best works for the interests of not only our taxicab industry stakeholders, but ride-share companies and Winnipeggers.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Will the minister remove the clause against compensation so that drivers—or owners can be allowed to take legal action that should be their right?

Mr. Wharton: Again, referring back to the NDP-commissioned report by Meyers Norris Penny, it conducted the extensive consultation with taxi cab owners, drivers and dispatch companies and members of the public, Madam Speaker, and business organizations that rely on taxicabs. And, quite frankly, the City of Winnipeg will have every opportunity to ensure that the safety of our cab-taxicab drivers and their passengers, once they develop their bylaw, will be in place.

Mr. Fletcher: The minister didn't ask my—answer my previous question about accessibility and, furthermore, Manitoba is a pure no-fault province for personal injury and for tinting glass which makes us completely unique from any other province in

Canada. So to take the capital region out without reflecting that is folly.

* (15:40)

Madam Speaker, can the minister ask—or tell us what is going to happen to accessible transportation and the differential between personal and commercial insurance costs? Because that is a reality in no-fault Manitoba.

Mr. Wharton: The member opposite has a number of questions, and I'll try to answer them all. First and foremost, the accessibility issue will certainly be determined by the City of Winnipeg when they're sitting and working on—which we are going to be consulting with—on their bylaws to ensure that accessibility will be one of the issues that are of great concern, of course.

And the issue of insurance, again, will be dealt with through Manitoba Public Insurance, which, again, is a government monopoly on insurance, and I'm sure that they have been already working hard to ensure that insurance is properly associated with the—this bill.

Mr. Saran: Does the minister know that in Australia, when Uber came, the government paid compensation to the existing owners?

Mr. Wharton: No, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, if a taxi company sets up in Oakbank or Headingley, picks up someone in one of those communities, goes, drives through Winnipeg, stops off downtown, then goes to Selkirk, which jurisdiction is that ride in, and who is going to be policing it, and who's going to be paying for the taxi police?

Mr. Wharton: In my opening comments, I did reference the fact that the ride—the—where the person is picked up, in that municipality, would be—that insurance in that municipality, through their bylaw, would cover it to the end of that particular trip. So if they cross multi-jurisdictions throughout the process of the ride, then it would be from the originating spot of that pickup service.

Mr. Saran: Does the minister know that it costs about up to 350 thousand to 500 thousand dollars to get a permit under the watch of taxi board? It was not part of the people who bought those taxis. It was part of the government. It's not just the NDP; it was previously under the Filmon government too. It used to be \$25,000, and now it's gone up to \$500,000.

What is the fault of those people who brought money over here, and now they're—it will be wiped out.

Mr. Wharton: As I mentioned earlier, we are providing Winnipeg with the powers it needs to build a new, better system. And one of that better—of course, better—one of that will be better—serve drivers better and serve our communities better.

Existing taxicab licences, as I mentioned earlier, will continue to be valid under Winnipeg's new bylaw, and taxicab business licences issued under existing municipal bylaws will also continue to be valid, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, we're drowning in red tape already. We're passing a piece of legislation to reduce red tape, yet, in the same evening, we're passing legislation to create more red tape.

Madam Speaker, this issue of different municipal—may the minister take this scenario: He's at CentrePort, gets picked up by a taxi. Is he in Rosser, or is he in the city of Winnipeg? Who knows? Who's going to police it? Who's going to say? Who's going to tell?

Mr. Wharton: Well, again, Madam Speaker, as mentioned several times, the municipalities are best positioned to ensure that bylaws are in place to protect taxicab owners, ride-share drivers and also our customers. And quite frankly, as we had mentioned before, we are very prepared to assist municipalities in the transition, in a smooth transition, from the current system that obviously is in need of change.

Thank you.

Mr. Saran: Does the minister know that some people, some immigrants came under the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program under business class to invest in the taxi business and it cost them around about more than \$300,000? Now, our minister is forwarding this responsibility to the City.

Where is this government's responsibility, and what the minister is going to do about—to compensate those people?

Mr. Wharton: Again, I reference the fact that existing taxicab licences will be—will continue to be valid under Winnipeg's new bylaw. Winnipeg is—and municipalities are best structured to ensure that they're writing bylaws that are sufficient for Winnipeggers, and of course taxicab drivers and

ride-share drivers as well, Madam Speaker. And again, the business licences, as I mentioned a couple of times, will be existing under the municipal bylaws. And again, municipal governments understand what's best for their residents in their communities.

Mr. Fletcher: This legislation is clearly not thought out. If you have a transition for a problem the government is creating, that's a bit rich.

But, moreover, to have a municipality response—so why don't all the taxicab companies in Winnipeg set up shop in Selkirk outside the reach of Winnipeg bylaws, and who's going to enforce where these taxis are? Who's going to pay for it? Who's going to police it? Why create the red tape? Why create the problem? Manitoba is unique with its insurance, but it's going to be unique in its red tape that's going to stop people from getting a taxi.

Mr. Wharton: Again, there are municipalities currently that have bylaws that govern taxicab industries in their local municipalities. That's been going on for a number of years. The City of Winnipeg is the only municipality in Manitoba that is governed under the provincial act, and every other city—potentially every other city in Canada—currently, the City of Winnipeg, the major urban centre, governs how a taxicab is governed. So it just simply makes sense, Madam Speaker, to ensure that the municipality of Winnipeg and other municipalities in this great province have the ability to govern at the levels that they need to do.

Mr. Fletcher: No, Madam Speaker, it does not make sense at all. You can have 30, 40, 50, 100 jurisdictions—that is quite a cab ride. And who's going to say where it started, it stopped? Who's going to say it was commercial or personal? What if there's an accident? What if—was it an accident with a passenger or a paying passenger? Who's going to say? It's a no-fault insurance province.

In Manitoba, the implementation of this act is virtually impossible. They know it. They have to know it. Winnipeg—Manitoba is unique and Manitoba is unique—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wharton: Again, I mentioned to the member opposite that, you know, currently, if you take a cab in Beausejour you can hire a local taxicab owner in Beausejour and drive to and within Beausejour or go outside of Beausejour and be subject to concerns with other municipalities. Well, part of the act, of

course, includes removing that Manitoba transport board and ensures that the regulation starts from point A, so where the site or where the ride was picked up, is carried through from that bylaw to the end result, Madam Speaker. And certainly we're not going to undermine what municipalities can and will do because they certainly understand what's—best needs for them.

* (15:50)

Mr. Saran: I'm really surprised. We have to be just followers. Can't we be leaders?

Winnipeg is more than 60 per cent of Manitoba's population, and we can extend then this board to all Manitoba instead of giving to the city. Can the minister not make money from the taxi industry by giving ongoing permit or ongoing price so we are hungry for the funds? On the other hand, we are giving up on those funds. Why we cannot take advantage of that?

Mr. Wharton: This gives me an opportunity again to—again put some facts on the record quickly. This is an opportunity for a clean slate. Winnipeg has and will have the powers necessary to create a modern regulatory regime that's best designed to serve the local interests of Winnipeggers. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The floor is open for debate.

Debate

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): You know, in response to the minister, what he is creating here is a big, big mess. And, you know, if it isn't obvious to him by now, it certainly will be by the time he finishes the hearings that are going to be occurring over the next number of days.

You know, this government brought this legislation in this past spring at the very last possible moment. And I've said before, that the act is really—it's a—should be renamed an act to destroy 1,600 jobs and turn—make a new low-wage economy in Manitoba.

Even worse, this bill contains provisions to prohibit compensations to the many small businesses in the taxicab industry, and it knows full well that they're going to be affected very seriously by this legislation.

When was the last time a government brought in legislation with such a provision? You would have to look back quite a way because I'm going to have examples for you. Back in 1970 with Autopac where, when the government brought in the Autopac system, they provided compensation to roughly 400 agents who were not inclined to sign into the Autopac system to get an Autopac contract, and 400 private agents shared \$2.5 million in compensation at that time.

I will also be very pleased to fill the minister, who admitted he doesn't know any jurisdiction that's provided compensation. Well, all he has to do is look at Australia where Australian states are compensating with various different compensation packages. But every one of them are compensating at the moment. Now, we can argue about whether or not it's adequate or not, because it's not, but certainly this is an option that is certainly being pursued there and for all the right reasons. Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, if your house, your pension fund or your farm is going to be worth half of its value at the stroke of a pen? This bill will drastically reduce the value of the small businesses by this legislation and makes them specifically—makes them not eligible for compensation. If the government was introducing the legislation for a social good or some obvious social benefit, there may be some justification for this legislation, but no justification to the callous subsection 10 that specifically prohibits the small businesses from seeking some form of compensation.

What's even worse is the complete abdication of social responsibility of this government in facilitating not only the destruction of an important part of our transportation infrastructure but the red carpet deregulation that's rolling out to a parasitic business model. That's why we want this government to withdraw, rethink this legislation and properly consult with the industry so obviously affected by it.

Subsection 10 of this legislation is stark proof that this government can foresee a serious decline in the investment values of those affected small businesses and families. They wipe out the licences with a stroke of a pen. That's why they've inserted this subsection so the taxi industry has no recourse for compensation. They have the power to deny any monetary compensation in any drop or elimination of value, and this represents an abuse of government power. Talk about the heavy hand of government attacking small business. This is what it looks like.

Now, contrast—Madam Speaker, contrast this government's immoral attitude towards small business and families with the recent Canada-European trade agreement, CETA, where we reasonably saw the government of Canada moving forward on a compensation package to cover losses that will be suffered by the Quebec dairy sector as a result of access Europeans are granted in the CETA deal. If it's good enough for Quebec dairy farmers, why can't we adopt fair practices here?

Please tell me the difference between the Quebec dairy farmers and the Manitoba taxicab industry. Well, I'll tell you the difference. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) knows that taxi companies don't elect MPs to Ottawa that—the way the Quebec dairy farmers can. Madam Speaker, dairy farmers of Quebec are relieved that the federal government is committed to the long-awaited compensation.

Now, I mentioned previously that in 1970 when the Schreyer government introduced the Autopac legislation, that there was a headline—I just had this sent in in the last minute or two so I'm really not even sure which newspaper it was in. It's either the Tribune or the Free Press for sure. But it's—the headline is: government to aid to 400. Says about 400 private automobile insurance agents throughout the province will share \$2.5 million in compensation—and this is 1970 dollars, so you'll have to adjust this—in compensation to be paid to those in the industry who will have—lose income as a result of the Manitoba government's compulsory Autopac scheme.

So they offered the agents of the day the option of having a contract for Autopac, and a number of them said no, we want the compensation. And they took it. And the history of this, of course, is that it didn't really work out well for these people because after four or five years a lot of them wanted to get back in, and so they had to go and buy at much higher rates, you know, an agency that was available at that time. But this is an example. When the minister says he's not aware of any other examples of compensation, well, I just gave you two: the CETA agreement currently before the Parliament and the Autopac system.

Now, if he wants some more examples, let's take a look at some more examples. We have a taxi driver compensation for Uber is unfair and poorly implemented—but it is compensation, Madam Speaker. In Australia they say in all states that have legalized the ride-sharing app Uber, the response has

been to offer compensation to taxi drivers. This is a typical move by governments that are liberalizing long-standing regulated monopolies, but the amount of compensation is far from fair and the process has been poorly implemented.

Victoria—that's the state of Victoria in Australia—is the latest of the states and territories to allow Uber to operate, and its compensation package is the most generous. They are doing it with a—an Australian \$2 levy on each ride and it's proposed to provide compensation in the order of around \$378 million, and the other states by contrast have lesser monetary compensation. In Sydney, for example, the average licence value peaked at around \$425,000 in 2011, and they're only offering \$20,000 per cab—with limits, I believe, on how many—with a limit of—maximum of two cabs.

* (16:00)

So you can see that in the state of—in Australia, the states are—at least have moved towards allowing for compensation. And you can argue that it's nowhere near what it should be, but at least they're there. How in this—can this government sit back and pretend and not see anything? It's like hear no evil, see no evil, right? They don't even know what's going on in Australia. They don't want to know what's going on in Australia and other parts, and they want—they feel they're going to be the leaders here. We have excellent safety—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.

The time being 4 p.m., I am now interrupting proceedings to conclude second reading of the designated bills.

For designated bills that have already been fully debated, I will immediately put the question without further debate. For designated bills that have not yet been fully debated, the minister, critic and each independent member may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes followed by an up to 15-minute question-and-answer period for each bill.

If any of the members I just noted above have not spoken to any of these bills, they will be given that opportunity as part of this process.

For the information of the House, the following designated bills have already been debated and will proceed directly to the question: Bill 23.

The following designated bills have not yet been fully debated and will proceed to debate, as I have

noted, for actions not already completed: bills 24, 27, 30 and 31.

The bills will be called in the order they appear on the Order Paper. The House will not adjourn until all of the applicable questions have been put.

Finally, in accordance with our rules, matters of privilege and points of order will be set aside until all votes are completed.

I will now call the question on second reading of Bill 23, The Fisheries Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

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

Order, please.

The question before the House is second reading of the fishery of—Bill 23, The Fisheries Amendment Act.

Recorded Vote

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler,

Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Kinew, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 41, Nays 14.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* (16:20)

Bill 24—The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017

Madam Speaker: We will now move to Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: It is a privilege to speak on Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act. Our government, as you know, is committed to being one-becoming Canada's most-improved province for regulatory accountability by 2020. We value an effective, efficient and transparent regulatory system for all Manitobans.

This legislation is an initial step toward that accountability goal. By comparison, under the previous government, Manitoba was the laggard in Canada, getting an F on the CFIB's provincial red tape report card in 2016. When we formed government, the simple question of how many regulatory requirements existed could not be answered, and that lack of accountability is not acceptable. It's why we introduced The Regulatory Accountability Act this past spring. We did get an answer to that question. We found out and reported that Manitobans, there are over 900,000 regulatory requirements existing as of April the 1st, 2016. Now, that is 900,000 actions or steps that the provincial government requires in order for business, non-profit, local government or private citizens to access government services, participate in activities or just do business. I can guarantee you that not all of those

900,000 requirements are ensuring value for Manitoba.

So we asked the civil service to identify and recommend which of these requirements did not add value to the citizens and which ones did. And the results of that process are this act. And so this bill would eliminate regulatory requirements that civil servants identified as not creating public value or moving Manitoba toward desired policy goals. We will do this without compromising human health and safety, without compromising environmental objectives or without compromising other essential economic and social goals.

The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act amends, or repeals, 15 pieces of legislation, reducing the red tape that is creating burdens on business, non-profits, municipalities, private citizens and government officials. Madam Speaker, the 'noxus'—The Noxious Weeds Act, since 1968—that act has required the minister of Agriculture review any weed control action that costs more than \$500. The provisions in this bill would change that, would simply allow for the weed inspectors on the ground, and the weed control districts to make those decisions instead of the minister.

When it comes to the Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act, we know that we take a results-based and not an ideological approach to P3s as the predecessors did. We are the only province with legislation regarding P3s. All other provinces effectively manage P3s in a comprehensive policy framework. This would create that symmetry with other jurisdictions.

Pertaining to The Veterinary Services Act. Every year in Manitoba, 27 veterinary services districts are required to undergo a full audit, a full third-party audit to review their finances and submit them to the Auditor General. Madam Speaker, in some cases, these organizations oversee total expenditures of 50 or 75 thousand dollars, and a full audit requirement eats into those very, very meagre sums by a large amount. And so we know that those audits can be in excess of \$4,000. Simply, we are replacing that audit requirement with a more reasonable and appropriate financial recording-reporting requirement prescribed through regulation.

The Health Services Act is simply a tidying-up measure that simply says because there is no more—no longer hospital boards and medical nursing districts, this change would see those references in

legislation simply removed. It's a housekeeping measure, since no organizations are actually regulated by this act.

The Consumer Protection Act is simply—takes and removes a mandatory triennial PUB—or, Public Utilities Board—review of government cheque cashing rates. And it provides the minister responsible the authority to review the rate when it is appropriate.

The Residential Tenancies Act is a clarification to The Residential Tenancies Act. Right now, there isn't sufficient detail within the act to determine with certainty if certain types of living accommodation are covered by the legislation. This—basically, then, the changes we would bring will reduce the necessity for landlords and tenants to attend hearings in order to resolve disputes in certain definitions. There are certain categories of housing whereby people prepare diligently, come to the hearing and then realize that they are not covered by the act.

The Forest Health Protection Act simply makes a change to say that an individual who is an arborist does not need to have a second certification by the province—that their certification that they already hold as a designated arborist is sufficient. We are the last province to require a provincial licence, and this would bring us in line with all other provinces.

The Ecological Reserves Act, which was asked about earlier today in question period, is simply a measure that would create efficiency. Right now there are two reports; they are duplicate. They are both required to be tabled in the Legislature in any given year. In this case, we would simply remove that duplicate provision. But, at the same time, Manitobans would still have access to all the information through Sustainable Development's annual report and through mandatory annual federal reporting systems. No change to what's reported; simply an efficiency measure on the part of government.

The Groundwater and Water Well Act takes and simply removes sections of the act that were never implemented. So they were never in effect, Madam Speaker, due to the administrative burden that they create. So we're removing the not-in-force sections from the act that deal specifically with identification plates and annual validations strips for drilling rigs. I believe when we asked, department officials could not even understand why those provisions had been contemplated in the first place.

The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act simply creates two categories. Right now, Manitoba and Nova Scotia are the only provinces that subject used oil facilities to unnecessary restrictions that are meant for far more hazardous chemicals. In this case, the change that we're bringing doesn't affect at all those agencies or groups or businesses that deal with the more hazardous substances. Those very stringent regulatory measures remain in place, but those who deal with things like used oil recycling—then they are required to comply with operational standards prescribed through regulation. It differentiates between levels of acuity when it comes to the recovery of these materials.

The Manitoba Natural Resources Development Act was introduced in the 1980s and never used, and it is being repealed as the act serves no purpose and the department, again, did not know that—why those provisions were still on the books.

The Drinking Water Safety Act, the changes maintain a strong drinking water safety program that is comparable to other Canadian jurisdictions, but it adds a certain discretionary power for the department's director to simply extend the assessment cycle of a water infrastructure system—most times it is a small water infrastructure system—when they believe they're in good condition and when there has been a strong compliance record. This would then, in effect—in practice—allow the director to be able to focus on bad actors, to take an evidence-based approach and simply put their limited resources into making sure those systems are safe. Right now, this would align our regulatory system with those in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

*(16:30)

The environmental act, there's changes here that, basically, display that our government takes a science-based approach when applying regulatory requirements. It—we have some of the most extensive requirements right now in Canada, and they would be maintained even with the changes we're bringing as well.

There's a few others that I would like to speak to, but I do not believe that the time allotted to me will be sufficient. Let me say, in conclusion, Madam Speaker, I welcome questions during the question-and-answer format if there are questions that arise, but Bill 24 will help grow and rebuild our economy, making changes to improve efficiency and

effectiveness of government operations while reducing red tape and maintaining legitimate public policy goals.

I'm looking forward to the co-operation of all members in the Legislature to see that the discussion, the debate and the consideration at committee will take place in the not too distant future.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Does the Finance critic wish to speak to this bill? Oh—the member for Wolseley.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I can't really say that I'm pleased to be speaking about this legislation, because it's pretty awful legislation, but I do believe it is important to speak truth to power and to call out this government for its exceptionally anti-environmental and anti-accountability measures that are included in this Bill 24.

And, you know, this government, there's a lot of parallels between the Pallister government and the Harper government. Harper was a huge fan of omnibus bills which he would drop on the House of Commons without any advance notice in the hopes that people would not have enough time to pore through it and see what he was actually up to. And, quite often, those omnibus bills contained a wide range of provisions that weakened environmental protections and eroded the fabric of Canadian life and society.

And we were, I think, very wise, as the official opposition, to not allow that process to unfold without further scrutiny. This was one of only five bills that we are allowed by House rule to hold over, over the summer, to give the community and to give ourselves an opportunity to more properly review the contents of this legislation and be in a position to challenge the government on their assertions.

The—Bill 24 continues, unfortunately, a very early trend that started right from the beginning with the Pallister government of being opposed to environmental protection, in fact, weakening and making things worse for the environment and for the Manitobans who—to live here. And while much of the criticism, the very justified criticism, directed at Bill 24 is related to the environmental provisions in it, there are also a number of aspects here which will be very negative for vulnerable people and families in Manitoba and for accountability generally in Manitoba.

So let me start with a few words on that. Amongst the over one dozen pieces of legislation that this government wanted to ram through without proper scrutiny are amendments to The Consumer Protection Act. Now, it used to be that the Public Utilities Board was mandated, Madam Speaker, mandated every three years to review the amount that a financial institution could charge for the cashing of a government cheque.

Now, for those MLAs who do not have the privilege of working with low-income and vulnerable families in their constituencies very often, let me tell you just how detrimental removing this provision could be. Low-income people, quite often, whether it's from a lack of identification or a lack of assets or whatever else may be the case, they do not have a chequing account. They do not have an account at a financial institution. They are captives to the cash stores and moneylending shops that are out there. And this provision made sure that we in Manitoba had regulatory oversight through the Public Utilities Board to make sure that those other financial transaction businesses were not gouging low-income people, so when they got a cheque from the government, that a huge amount of that money didn't just disappear into the pockets of investors who could be scattered all over the world, ultimately.

But now, because the Pallister government continues to display its disdain for low-income people in particular and for Manitobans in general, they are now removing this provision altogether, which obviously means that if the government uses its majority to ram this legislation through, vulnerable, low-income people across the province are going to get gouged by financial institutions who are inclined to do that already at every opportunity.

I don't understand how a single Tory member of this Chamber—all of us have low-income members in our constituency. I don't understand how a single one of them are going to be able to look themselves in the mirror and say, I did a good thing today when I voted for Bill 24. I am absolutely convinced they are betraying the trust that those citizens put in them to defend their interests, and this government's doing the exact opposite.

On another front not directly related to the environment, but also contained—buried, I should say, in Bill 24, a piece of legislation that we brought in called The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act is hereby repealed. You've got to go all the way down to the

end of the act before you come to this tiny little clause at the bottom which says that this remarkably important piece of legislation is just unilaterally going to be done away with with the stroke of a pen by the Pallister government, a government which claims up one side and down the other to be about accountability. Here is the proof that nothing further could be away from the truth.

When you are repealing legislation which only requires that a public-private partnership be publicly accountable for what it is doing, for what it will result in, for how much it will cost, that legislation should be a no-brainer for this or any other government. And yet, the Pallister government does not want to be accountable. They want to funnel public money to their private corporate friends at every opportunity. And when they are able, with the stroke of a pen, to remove that accountability through Bill 24, yet again, I have to ask every single one of these Conservative MLAs, how can they honestly believe they are service-serving the best interests of their constituents when they are prepared to do away with public accountability like that in this act?

And then on the environmental front, we have heard quite a bit about the very negative aspects of this legislation on the environment already. Government MLAs should be prepared to hear a whole lot more. It's been a few days since I checked the number of citizens who have indicated they are coming down for the committee hearings on Bill 24, Madam Speaker. They will, I'm sure, be bringing a large number of well-informed, reasonable arguments why what this government is doing is going to be detrimental to our health, detrimental to our planet, and detrimental to our current and future generations.

I certainly hope the government reconsiders provisions such as the proposal here to do away with a section of The Environment Act, which prohibits winter spreading of livestock manure. Now the government will claim, oh, but the law's still going to exist in regulation; we're just removing it from law. If you believe that spreading manure on a frozen field is a bad idea because when the snow melts, the manure will run off into the streams, well, why would you remove legislative protection for that? Any regulation, Madam Speaker, including the one that they claim will remain on the books—any single regulation—can be undone at a meeting of Cabinet on any Wednesday morning.

If they are serious about protecting waterways, this section should be struck out. The past environment minister and the—should have had this removed the moment she heard about it, assuming their caucus talks about these things at all—doesn't sound like they do. Another reason why maybe they ought to consider it. The current Sustainable Development Minister should certainly—if she wants to claim to be doing a good job, should have this section absolutely removed.

And I don't have much time left, but suffice to say that members of the public will be down here to inform the public—or to inform this government, rather, on the many flaws contained in this legislation. I look forward to a hearty debate, and I sincerely hope that this government is able to look past partisan lines, is able to get out of its Harper-like style of bringing in omnibus legislation and ramming things through the Legislature, and actually take a sober second moment, listen to what people are telling them and actually make things better for Manitobans rather than worse.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader.

* (16:40)

House Business

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

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, I'm seeking leave of the House to make a request regarding private members' business on Tuesday, October 24th, 2017.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House for the Government House Leader to make a request regarding private members' business on Tuesday, October 24th, 2017? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Cullen: I thank the House for that.

Madam Speaker, could you please canvass the House for unanimous consent to allow the following arrangements for private members' business on Tuesday, October 24th, 2017: (1) from 10 to 10:30 the House will consider a bill with a title to be determined before the 24th; (2) from 10:30 to 11:15 the House will consider the private member's resolution sponsored by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), titled Dwarfism Awareness; and (3) From 11:15 to 12:00 the House will consider

the private member's resolution sponsored by the member for the Maples (Mr. Saran), entitled Establishment of Private Members Entitlement Equity.

Also, Madam Speaker, if the House agrees to these arrangements, this will serve as my official notice of both private member resolutions.

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for—*[interjection]*—oh. I would point out to the member that points of orders are not allowed at this period of time.

Is there unanimous consent to allow the following arrangements for private members' business on Tuesday, October 24th, 2017: (1) from 10:30—pardon me, from 10 to 10:30 the House will consider a bill with a title to be determined before the 24th; (2) from 10:30 to 11:15 the House will consider the private member's resolution sponsored by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), titled Dwarfism Awareness; and (3) from 11:15 to 12:00 the House will consider the private member's resolution sponsored by the member for the Maples (Mr. Saran), titled Establishment of Private Members Entitlement Equity.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on Bill 24, do any independent members wish to speak?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, a few comments on this bill.

First of all, we're in general support of measures to reduce red tape, provided that they are done well and wisely and don't end up in themselves causing huge amounts of extra time and unneeded time taken up in this effort.

I note, for example, the article which was published not long ago in the Winnipeg Free Press about the red-tape hunt in Manitoba Hydro. In a bid to cut government red tape Manitoba Hydro was forced to redeploy more than a dozen staff for three months, and it seems to me that the effort and the time here took away from some other valuable things that Manitoba Hydro workers could have been doing, and that while it is important to reduce red tape, it's important to do this wisely and efficiently and not using valuable resources at a time when the

government is cutting back on employees at Manitoba Hydro and the time that they have to get their primary job done at Manitoba Hydro is clearly limited. So a caution to the government in that respect.

While we are generally supportive of efforts to reduce red tape, we are concerned in this legislation that the government is maybe using this approach to red tape to reduce some critical environmental requirements, and this, again, should not be an effort. Red tape should not be used in terms of reducing red tape to lower environmental requirements. I am concerned, in particular, about the reduction of time from once every five years to once every 10 years that water suppliers must do an assessment of their infrastructure and water storage. In today's fast-moving world, I think that 10 years is too long for such a critical area and I'm skeptical and not convinced with the government's argument for moving to 10 years in assessing water sources which are really critical.

The Ecological Reserves Act, the requirement to provide a report on ecological reserves every five years is taken away now, notwithstanding that under the previous government the reports were often late. These are quite important reports because we're dealing with species which are, you know, in a sense like the canary in the coal mine, which are important species, which are endangered and which can tell us a lot about what's going on in the ecological world. And so it's important to be monitoring these species.

And I suggest that having this monitoring every five years is actually pretty reasonable because it gives an index of the health of these ecological—different ecological areas in the province in looking at this assessment.

The elimination of the prohibition on winter spreading of livestock manure, I see this as—even though it may be covered in some regulation. Such regulations can be changed quite easily, and this is really quite fundamental. Indeed, the government should have put in this bill the requirement to inject hog waste, hog manure into the ground instead of just putting it on the surface. This is now good practice in many municipalities and on many, many farms—hog farms in Manitoba. And certainly when the hog waste is injected into the ground, the problems with runoff into the waterways is very dramatically reduced.

This really should be a standard practice with the possible exception of farms with very, very low

numbers of hogs. Certainly, any large hog operation over a minimal size should have this requirement as part of good environmental stewardship.

I've talked with people in Manitoba Pork and they tell me that, you know, hog producers are ready for this sort of requirement. And I believe at a time when, you know, there's a lot of concern about the environment and Lake Winnipeg, that it would be reasonable, particularly with the industry, I understand, could be on board with this and we could move forward.

So with those few comments, although we support many aspects of this, there are some concerns and so we will, in fact, be voting against it at this stage, and we will see if there's amendments coming at the committee stage.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I will be supporting this legislation. However, I am very concerned about the overall approach to red tape by the government. On one hand we have the bill in front of us, but on the other we look around and we see red tape being created left, right and centre.

Let me provide some examples, perhaps the most ironic of them all is Red Tape Reduction Day. Red Tape Reduction Day Act is an act that recognizes reduction of red tape. So we have a day now to celebrate the reduction of red tape. So how is that even logically possible? You're bringing in an act to do exactly what the act says you shouldn't be doing.

Will we see an act coming in for blue and orange tape day to get rid of the red tape? What is going—what's next?

* (16:50)

Well, it gets better, Madam Speaker, or worse. Worse if you're a Conservative, because we ran—and yes, we, because we are all members of a same political party or we were until after my comments, the—we ran on better government. Yet we've just seen, a few hours ago, legislation that will create a regulatory nightmare that is not enforceable, dealing with the taxi industry, and it's not applicable in the Manitoba context.

Unfortunately, the answers that have been received through questions that were asked by my colleague from The Maples or from Elmwood or even from myself, none of them were answered, and we all came from the issue from different sides, and no answers were provided. And I'm going to go

through the scenarios of how that—how the ride-sharing legislation will create more red tape and off-load the costs to the taxpayer, and there's only one taxpayer. Or it will simply not be enforced and then you're undermining the taxi drivers completely.

Now, Madam Speaker, and any Conservatives listening to this, please do not let your children hear this, okay. I'm giving you a moment to get the children out of the room. Switch off the TV, switch off the radio, because I'm going to tell you something that the Conservative government's doing that we never campaigned on and no Conservative government in the 21st century should do.

Okay. The PC party, PC government of Manitoba, is creating a new Crown corporation. Oh, no. I can hear the kids screaming in the hallways. This is—goes beyond common sense. We did not campaign on this. We are—and, moreover—Madam Speaker, not only is a new Crown corporation like the antimatter—the way matter and antimatter—a new Crown corporation is the same to red tape. We are creating an entire new bureaucracy with new regulations, and I can't believe I'm saying this, but the regulations not only include hydro power generation, but it includes gas, potable water—drinkable water—and issues around transportation.

This is a train wreck. From a Conservative point of view, there is nothing worse than to create a monolithic Crown corporation that has mission creep and infinite powers, including—wait for it—the power to perhaps levy fees, taxes and rates. So it is potentially a vehicle to tax Manitobans, all in one swoop, Madam Speaker.

Now we don't have the kids in the rooms anymore because they're all looking at other places to go and live and grow up because Manitoba is not maximizing its potential. Yes, I support the bill, but I certainly do not support the creation of more red tape, and that is what we're doing with the Crown corporation—a new Crown corporation.

Madam Speaker, another red tape example: Let's say you're at CentrePort and you call a taxi. Are you in Rosser or are you in Winnipeg? Who knows. Nobody knows where that boundary is. But you drive from Rosser through to Red River College, and then you go to Selkirk. Where did that ride begin, where did it end? It's going to be up to the municipalities of Rosser and Winnipeg to figure that out and enforce it? And then what about Selkirk? What happens on the return, if a cab's coming back—

from Selkirk back to Winnipeg? Is it Selkirk that's going to enforce that? Or Winnipeg?

And what happens to issues around insurance? That's—for-like, I—look, I have problems with MPI. If anyone has problems with MPI, I have certainly had them. But in this sense, I empathize with MPI. And that is: how do you insure the difference between a commercial driver and a personal-driven car?

So if you imagine this, Madam Speaker: someone's in the car and, boom, they get hit. There's a claim—personal injury claim. Now, if the Uber driver did not claim that time as insurable for commercial reasons, is MPI on the hook? Does the victim end up paying for that? Does the Uber driver pay commercial rates or personal-use insurance rates? And who's to know, because you won't know until it happens and we pre-pay our auto insurance, so there is actually no way of knowing. And we will find that only accidents that happen to occur with a passenger on business trips will find their way to MPI when, in fact, there are—when, in fact, that may not be the case.

Madam Speaker, red tape is bad. Why are we creating days to celebrate it? Why are we creating more red tape and why on earth is a supposedly progressive conservative government deviating from the platform on which it was elected and creating a new Crown corporation—the monolith of doom? Doom. Doom. Doom. Doom.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further independent members that wish to speak to this bill? If not, we will move into the question and answer period.

Questions

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

Are there any questions?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, through you—will there be additional bureaucracy associated with Efficiency Manitoba? Bill 19?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, I was reaching for my microphone so I confess, I missed part of the picture—the question. I'll sit down and I would ask the member to restate his question.

Madam Speaker: Could the member for Assiniboia please restate his question?

Mr. Fletcher: I'm not sure if I'm happy or sad to restate it, but it is this: Creating the new Crown corporation, Efficiency Manitoba—does that create or reduce bureaucracy and red tape?

* (17:00)

Mr. Friesen: Well, I think that the member's question strays a little bit from the content of the bill. You know, we have important measures here that are designed to cut down on that regulatory requirement that we think does not add value. And so this set of recommendations are those types of things.

I would suggest to the member he would have opportunity for a robust discussion on demand-side-management approaches in another forum.

Mr. Fletcher: So the minister refuses to answer the question of the whole government red tape strategy.

Will the minister agree that Efficiency Manitoba deals with things like potable water, transportation, natural gas, as well as hydro, and that that will create a great bureaucratic burden on the ratepayer and taxpayer?

Mr. Friesen: The member's assertion is false. I'm happy to answer all kinds of questions on our strategy. Our strategy is to cut the obstacles that private business, private citizens, non-profits and other entities face in trying to do business, transact and seek government services. That's why we countered the regulatory burden. That's why we are differentiating between those that add value and those that do not. This bill itself contains many provisions where it is a common sense approach, other ones that simply reflect on legislation that's no longer in effect, bringing changes that will make it easier for people to access services with government. That's the basic approach to our strategy.

Mr. Fletcher: Conservative governments in the 21st century do not create Crown corporations because that creates bureaucracy and overhead and regulation. Red tape.

How can the government, on one hand, say they're reducing red tape, which is fine, and then, on

the other, create a huge monolithic sea of red tape—the red sea of tape, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Friesen: I think that when it comes to our government's approach we've been very, very clear the starting point was to count that regulatory requirement. We said in this province it was 900,000 separate regulatory requirements. We're working back from that number. So to the member I would say that walking back from that exorbitant number of regulations does demonstrate our government's very sincere desire to reduce red tape.

I would suggest to the member that he will have other opportunities to ask his questions on demand-side-management approaches. I do not believe this would be the best forum for that.

Mr. Fletcher: Again, the minister doesn't discuss potable water, transportation or natural gas. However, let's talk about ride-sharing.

Madam Speaker, who pays for the additional costs of the policing to enforce the bylaws that all these municipalities are going to face? Is it the taxpayer, the ratepayer, the fare—the people paying the fare, or is it just going to magically cost nothing?

Mr. Friesen: There is no provision in Bill 24 for the items that the member is bringing.

Mr. Fletcher: So the costs of policing have not been considered. Can the minister tell us, with dealing with red tape, how will the vehicles to police this ride-sharing legislation be licensed? Will they be cars, snowmobiles, trucks, motorcycles or black helicopters?

Mr. Friesen: Again, Madam Speaker, there are provisions in this bill pertaining to The Residential Tenancies Act, the consumer protection, health services, veterinary services, P3s, the environment, labour relations and noxious weed provisions. There is not a provision in this bill such as the member is referencing in his preamble.

Mr. Fletcher: The minister has made my point. The fact is the government, with its initiatives on other issues, has actually, unfortunately at this point, creating red tape.

How can the minister even agree that there should be a red tape reduction day, while at the same time creating red tape throughout government?

Mr. Friesen: I would want to disabuse the member of any notion that somehow this will be the sum total of our efforts in terms of reducing regulatory burden.

Look, starting with an overall understanding that there are more than 900,000 regulations, it would be reasonable to suggest that not all of those regulatory obligations add value to Manitobans. So I would suggest to the member he can be assured of the fact that we will not lose heart; we will not lose enthusiasm, when it comes to cutting red tape. We will stay on this, and he can expect more bills of this kind that will provide value to all Manitobans.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, the minister be—may be interested to know that I had the great honour of serving seven years on the federal Treasury Board and dealt with every single regulation the federal government passed or withdrew for seven years, and that makes Manitoba look like a government department.

Look, the provincial government, with the few pieces of legislation that we talked about, is creating more red tape with those two bills than the Harper government did in its entire time in office. Harper went down; we're going up.

Mr. Friesen: The member is incorrect in his assertion. This government's approach on red-tape accountability is the most robust of any province in this nation. Our goal is to be the most improved on regulatory accountability. The starting point for that is 900,000 regulations. From that number, we are walking back. I would say to that member, hang on to your hat and watch us go as a province as we add value to all private citizens, to businesses, to non-profits, to all other entities, as they interface with government.

Government has a responsibility to make sure it watches the growth of regulatory burden, and we will do so.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, I'm going to suggest to Manitobans that they hang on to their wallets.

Madam Speaker, the fact is, the government is creating a bureaucracy at a rate not seen. Most improved province—I grant that that is very achievable because the Province did a terrible job in the past, so doubling nothing is easy to do, and that would be the most improved.

But what we are talking about is macro changes in how the entire government operates. Change, most improved—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired

Mr. Friesen: I didn't hear a question in the member's assertion.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, that's okay. I understand. People were laughing, perhaps at or with, or because of, the minister's answers.

Madam Speaker, the question is: Why create more red tape? Why is the minister claiming to be the most improved province? Like, that doesn't mean anything because we were the worst province for a decade. Where are the Conservative values that people voted for?

Mr. Friesen: I suggest to the member that people might have been laughing because his preamble in the question-answer period didn't contain a question. However, on the question he just asked now, well, the member should not doubt our sincerity. As a government, we've said we take this very seriously. It's why we created a Regulatory Accountability Secretariat within government. We've created a framework in which regulation must be challenged. We have committed to all Manitobans that we will report, that they will have access to regulation online. If it's not seen, it does not exist.

It's that kind of robust and extensive commitment of accountability that should give evidence to him that we plan to do what we say and get results for all Manitobans in this regard.

* (17:10)

Mr. Fletcher: That's right, Madam Speaker, creating a committee and a secretariat to reduce red tape by creating red tape to create the committee—perhaps that's where red day—red tape reduction day came from.

Madam Speaker, why and how are Manitobans supposed to pay for the red tape that the government is creating throughout Crown corporations and even at the level of a taxi fare?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, let's understand that that member is arguing in circles. He just in his last comment said that we were worst in Canada, but then when we indicated the actions and steps we were taking he says, well, don't do that, because that won't add value. So his rationale seems to be do nothing and continue to get the same result.

We won't do nothing. We know where doing nothing under the NDP was getting Manitoba—it was the worst results on regulatory accountability. So we will not give that member the commitment that we'll do nothing; we will build what we believe is an appropriate system, a system based on evidence that will get results for Manitobans and we will not, as

government, apologize for getting those results for all Manitobans.

Mr. Fletcher: When it comes to creating new Crown corporations, I urge the minister to do nothing. Do not do it. Don't go there. Don't create more red tape. Do nothing on that, but do something on red tape throughout government. Do what we were elected on; do what people want, and that is less red tape, not more. The government is clearly creating red tape where none is needed. Why?

Mr. Friesen: So, I think that the member there was expressing support, finally, for the measures of the bill, because what he clearly said was do something about the level of red tape that faced those same Manitobans, independent that Manitobans' families, businesses, non-profits, other levels of government. Clearly, that member from Assiniboia said you must do something, and that is exactly why this government has brought Bill 24, to be able to deliver results for Manitobans based on evidence, based on recommendations of civil servants bringing these measures, saying this will help to clear up—first steps in cleaning up the regulatory landscape.

We are committed to getting these results, and we ask for that member's, and all members of this House, support for these measures.

Mr. Fletcher: Madam Speaker, my opening remarks I already indicated my position on the bill. The fact is, a government approach should not increase red tape anywhere. If you're going to reduce it, reduce it, but don't increase it with new Crown corporations, crazy taxicab regulations that are not enforceable and impossible to police and will cost a fortune and undermine the entire industry and wreck the service for elderly, disabled and financially—people in financial difficulty. Why can't the minister just—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: Well, one point in question was raised earlier by the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer). He made the comment that somehow this government was bringing changes that would completely remove the protections for cheque-cashing regime—nothing could be farther from the truth. In the last three presentations to the Public Utilities Board, there was a presentation, a lot of work to do so, and the rate was unchanged. All this seeks to do is to say the minister should bring the application when it makes sense, and nothing removes the provision. That member's trying to create fear; we're trying to bring results for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has ended, and it is now time to put the question.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I heard a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

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

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

* (17:20)

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 24, The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino

(Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk: Yeas 38, Nays 16.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 27—The Elections Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act, which has been recommended by His Honour the Administrator.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Crown Services, that Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: It is been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, for years now Manitoba has been the only province in the country that conducts province-wide enumeration for each election cycle. This process has proven to be inefficient and costly for Elections Manitoba, and it's time to implement a plan that promotes democracy across this great province of ours.

Bill 27 modernizes and improves our electoral system ensuring that we are consistent with the federal government and with provinces across Canada as we replace door-to-door enumerations with a permanent voter register.

The new permanent voter register established in Bill 27 will be based on the final voters' list from the 2016 election. Regular updates will then be made with data from Elections Canada, Manitoba Public Insurance, the Vital Statistics Agency and Manitoba Health.

Voters will also be able to apply to the register at any time up to the close of revision before the next general election.

Madam Speaker, we're listening to experts. In June 2013, the Chief Electoral Officer released a

study on the creation of a permanent voter register and made recommendations. Bill 27 is a direct result of those recommendations, and our government has consulted with the Chief Electoral Officer every step of the way.

The evidence shows that provinces that do not rely on door-to-door enumeration that have permanent voter registers typically have higher enumeration rates. Elections BC estimates that in their 2013 election nearly 97 per cent of eligible voters were registered compared with around 75 per cent in the 2016 Manitoba election.

However, we recognize that at different times there may be gaps in the register, that's why the Chief Electoral Officer will still be able to order a targeted registration in particular in communities such as those with high mobility or transient populations.

Madam Speaker, the permanent voter register will help us register as many eligible Manitobans as possible to vote. But Bill 27 also makes important changes that will protect the most important aspect of our democracy, the integrity of our electoral system.

* (17:30)

Madam Speaker, under Bill 27 Manitoba voters not on the voters' list must establish their identity with either one piece of government photo ID or two pieces of ID satisfactory to Elections Manitoba. If this ID doesn't identify residence, the voter will sign a declaration confirming their residence.

The ID requirements are the same if a voter is on the voters' list. However, if a voter who is on the voters list cannot establish their identity or residence, they will have the additional option of asking someone to vouch for their identity.

There is nothing new about these ID requirements, Madam Speaker. Manitobans are required to produce identification right now when voting in advance polls for provincial elections. Federal and municipal elections conducted in Manitoba also have similar ID requirements.

Bill 27 simply makes our elections more consistent while also taking responsible steps to protect the 'integrity'—the integrity of the vote.

Madam Speaker, Bill 27 protects the integrity of our elections in many other ways as well. The legislation includes additional privacy protection measures, new offences for impersonating a

candidate and in-service days for schools on fixed date elections.

Bill 27 makes common-sense changes that are long overdue. For that reason, I was disappointed that the members opposite decided to delay its passage. As a result of that delay, the Chief Electoral Officer will no longer be able to provide a copy of the voters list to registered parties by February 15th, 2018, as specified in this bill. The tactics of the members opposite have necessitated an upcoming amendment to change the date to February 15th, 2019.

I will also be introducing another amendment that will improve the administration of this act. Madam Speaker, I have already mentioned that we take the expertise of the Chief Electoral Officer very seriously. Under section 28.1, the Chief Electoral Officer is granted the ability, with approval from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, to make modifications to improve voting—the voting process and achieve greater administrative efficiencies. However, the section as worded does not require the standing committee to consider proposed modifications within a specified time frame. So I will be introducing an amendment that will require the committee to begin considering those modifications within 60 days.

In closing, Madam Speaker, Bill 27 will make our democracy more efficient, more secure and stronger for all Manitobans. It will protect the integrity of the electoral process now and into the future, and I include—and I encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

Madam Speaker: Does the official opposition critic wish to speak to the bill?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to just put a couple of words on the record.

It's interesting listening to the Minister of Justice. In her words to her bill, she used throughout the—her narrative, words like integrity and strengthening and modernizing our democracy. It feels as if she is trying to imply that there's something wrong with our elections in Manitoba, and I think that that's not the case. We know that Manitobans value the principles of democracy and that they expect their elected officials to uphold the principles of free and fair elections.

On this side of the House, our NDP team opposes this bill because it actually undermines the legitimacy of our democracy, contrary to what the

minister has shared with us just in the last couple of minutes, by actually disenfranchising unregistered voters who do not have a form of photo ID. Quite simply, Madam Speaker, this is voter suppression here in Manitoba. If this bill is passed, Manitoba will have actually one of the most restrictive ID laws in the country despite the fact that there is no evidence of voter fraud in Manitoba.

The Premier's (Mr. Pallister) proposed legislation requires unregistered voters without photo ID to present their photo registration cards as ID, which is actually impossible if they're not registered voters. It's a Catch-22 for people because it appears that if you don't have photo ID and you've been missed from the enumeration, there will be no way for you to vote on election day. And, again, that is voter suppression. It actually attacks those the least likely to be enumerated and put in the registry, those of newcomers and refugees, indigenous peoples within Manitoba, all across Manitoba

way for you to vote on election day. And, again, that is voter suppression. It actually attacks those the least likely to be enumerated and put in the registry, those of newcomers and refugees, indigenous peoples within Manitoba, all across Manitoba, and Manitobans who are living in poverty and are economically marginalized and vulnerable.

You know, it's no secret that community activists have noted that a lack of access to ID is a widespread problem affecting those who are overly represented in the ranks of the working poor, the elderly, those living with a disability, newcomers, students, and indigenous peoples.

Some of these groups are among those who are the least likely to vote and this government actually wants to make it even more difficult for them instead of creating a system where we're encouraging people to vote, and the most marginalized and disenfranchised were actually discouraging them participating in our democracy.

And so, you know, when you juxtapose that to the narrative that the minister is saying in strengthening our democracy, in fact this bill works to lessen our democracy and to exercise for people—the ability for people to exercise their democracy.

This is not the first time that this, like a discriminatory bill of this nature has been put forward in Canada. The Harper government introduced similar regressive measures to try and suppress votes, but actually found itself having to

back down from some of their measures after receiving a firestorm of negative responses from coast to coast to coast. And it's surprising that the Pallister government didn't learn from this and actually see and walk itself away from presenting such legislative changes.

The Government of Canada actually estimates that about 172,000 non-voters stated that the lack of ID was the reason of them not voting in the 2015 federal election. So we can see just on a federal election—on a federal level, that it is a huge issue for Manitobans and Canadians not having IDs to be able to participate in our democratic processes.

Because of how photo IDs have an effect on voter participation, many other provinces in Canada have provisions for those who aren't registered. We believe in giving people a voice and working together to solve issues in our province, not excluding families and the most marginalized and vulnerable from the conversation and certainly not excluding them from our democratic processes.

The primary reason for this amendment, this legislative change, I would suggest to you, is to protect elections in Manitoba from voter fraud. However, there is no evidence to justify these changes. The Chief Electoral Officer in Manitoba said at a Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that, and I quote: We haven't had any complaints or any prosecutions on voter fraud in the history of Manitoba. So, probably that provides a level of confidence that the voter fraud or voting irregularities are low or nil.

So, Madam Speaker, that was at a Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs just November 25th, 2016, so when asked for proof that there is a voter fraud problem in Manitoba, the Premier or the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) couldn't produce any.

The Premier is legislating a solution to a problem that the Chief Electoral Officer of Manitoba says doesn't actually exist. So, you know, it would—I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that the real reason for this is obvious: In close elections, a few thousand votes across the province could actually change the outcome of an election, and our NDP team has consistently worked to even the playing field in Manitoba politics. We did that by ending union and corporate donations to political parties. We believe that every Manitoban's vote should count.

* (17:40)

The Conservatives would rather elections were decided by big business and their wealthy friends, and we know that they oppose the ban on union and corporate donations.

So, Madam Speaker, I just want to just put on the record just a couple of things as well in respect of some of the things that people are saying about Bill 27. So we know that Winnipeg Free Press columnist Dan Lett asked the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) how her election bills would increase transparency, and he said, and I quote, that she was at a loss for words. PC clear—that was in March 25th, 2017.

Duff Conacher, the co-founder of Democracy Watch, said these bills will, and I quote, make the system in Manitoba more undemocratic. So, again, I think that that's important to understand that when we juxtapose that to what the minister has put on the record today about the integrity of our democracy and modernizing our democracy, there are those that would say it actually does the exact opposite.

And actually, Madam Speaker, respected Manitoba political science—scientist, Paul Thomas, said that this agenda that there is, and I quote—there's no doubting the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) ideological orientation, and that the Tories are beginning to show, and I quote, their true colours.

We know that this bill is a part of the Legislative agenda that is out of step for—with the needs of Manitobans, but actually, I would suggest to you, is out of step in recognizing the rights of Manitobans to fully participate in our democratic processes.

And so, Madam Speaker, I want to make it—if I haven't made it clear, I want to make it explicitly clear that, you know, our NDP team stands for the rights of Manitobans to vote, and we say no to voter suppression. We believe that every Manitoban who wants to vote, who makes the effort to come out and vote, however that is, walking, taking the bus, whatever they need to do, should be able to have the ability to vote in our elections. And certainly, increasing the difficulty for certain Manitoba families and seniors to participate in elections is voter suppression, and we certainly will not be supporting this bill.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, I just want to say a few words. I—we are

also concerned about the voter identification, but we have a solution which we suggest to the minister, and that is that the health card, Manitoba health card, should be switched to have a photo ID, and then you would solve this problem, because right now, it's just based on primarily driver's licences, and there's a lot of people who don't have driver's licences—some communities which hardly have any cars, and it would make a lot more sense to have photo ID associated with our health card.

And so, we're going to support this bill at this stage and hope that you will report back that you will move forward on getting photo ID on health cards, and we'll reassess or vote at the next—at third reading, depending on, you know, what you bring forward in terms of a solution to this issue.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further independent members wishing to speak to this bill? If not, I will put the question.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 27—oh, sorry. That's right. I was jumping ahead. There is a question period on this one.

Questions

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I'd like to ask the minister whether she would see if she can move on getting photo ID on health cards for people in Manitoba.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, I thank the member for the question and I think that's probably more appropriately asked of the Minister of Health. But certainly I will say to him that with respect to this piece of legislation, this has been asked for, for a number of years now, by the Chief Electoral Officer. We think it's an important step forward to get more people on the voter registry, to have them as eligible voters.

We know it's happened out in BC, for example, that 97 per cent of eligible voters are actually on that voter registry, whereas in the last provincial election it was around 75 per cent in Manitoba. And so we want to move those numbers forward. We want more people in Manitoba voting in our elections, not less. And that's why we're proposing this piece of legislation.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): What other solutions for photo ID are possible? Will the minister help me pressure the minister of indigenous to help with the enormous shortage of Indian status cards on first-within First Nation communities?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I want to thank the member very much for her question. It is a very important one. And certainly we know that the list of eligible identification will be left up to the Chief Electoral Officer. There is a very long, lengthy list of what is used in other jurisdictions across Canada and indeed in the federal government as well. And the status card is one of those. But there's many, many other options that are there for the Chief Electoral Officer. So we believe we'll leave it up to her, as is said in this legislation.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

If not, I will then put the question to the House.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please summon the members for a recorded vote?

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

* (18:10)

Order, please.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Kinew, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk: Yeas 39, Nays 13.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Bill 30—The Local Vehicles for Hire Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to Bill 30, The Local Vehicles for Hire Act, and I would indicate that the minister and the critic have already spoken. As has question period happened, so what would be left for this is to see if any of the independent members wish to speak.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on this, and I am going to use largely comments which were provided by our critic, the MLA for Burrows.

This is a bill which will introduce quite drastic changes to the taxi industry in Manitoba. It dissolves the Taxicab Board, municipalities will have the ability to issue and regulate taxi licensing, and the bill allows the government to opt out so they wouldn't have to be liable for any losses incurred during the transition process.

Last session, the introduction of Bill 30 by the minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations sent shock waves among those in the taxi industry. Many

who live in Burrows have been left in the sidelines of the debate on this bill. As elected officials, it's our job to uphold what Manitobans are saying to us. I understand that our responsibility is to consult our constituents directly. And throughout the summer, the MLA for Burrows has been receiving emails and talking to many, many people about this bill and listening directly to what they have to say, and here's a few of the comments that she received:

(1) For our community, this is not just a news story. It is impacting how many of our family and friends have supported themselves, their families and given back to Manitoba.

(2) Competition is never bad, but I ask that the government ensure that all competitors face the same set of rules to ensure viability to make ends meet remains viable.

(3) In addition to insurance regulations, many in my community think that a standard sequence of licence plates, like all taxis currently have, should be mandated by the province.

(4) Ensuring that the future of the taxi industry is fair should be a top consideration for the government as they look toward reforms.

It's clear, Madam Speaker, that constituents are concerned how the changes will affect their livelihood in the fairness of competition. Many are dissatisfied with the way this government is handling something that can bring about rather drastic changes. And the MLA for Burrows wants to give voice and rise to talk about those who've been largely left out of the consultative process and have had no participation whatsoever. She says what's disappointing is how the government is not taking the debate seriously. All they do is push the blame game on the NDP for mismanagement. They refuse to work with the federal government in Ottawa, and now they download regulations to the municipal government. We've not seen this government take its fair share of responsibilities. Instead, we've seen this PC government in the clouds and imposing a vision on Manitoba that's detached what Manitobans are saying. We've seen this on various areas.

In Pharmacare, the government's introduced limits on how much dispensing fees pharmacists can claim from the government. In labour relations, we've seen the government introduce laws that curtail union certification and union rights, despite an overwhelming number of speakers speaking against it during committee stage.

In education, the government's introduced Bill 31, which has—increases the rate of tuition by 5 per cent, plus inflation. And they've also intervened in the bargaining process between the U of M and its faculty and have imposed limits on universities despite being independent institutions.

The government has undermined our health care. They've put our most vulnerable in greater risk by closing down emergency rooms. They've caused grave uncertainty among our front-line workers with job deletions.

They would drain Manitobans of their savings if they have them pay premiums for a service they greatly depend on for their well-being. That is the health-care premiums proposed by this government. And their survey on health care imposes limited choices on Manitobans.

* (18:20)

Bill 30 just adds to the list of bills that the government introduced without input from Manitobans. It is disturbing that decision making has been effectively taken from Manitobans and goes wholly over to members across the House floor.

And so, this time around, the following questions must be asked: When will this government begin to talk to people and consult? When will the government change direction in the way it consults? These questions have a unifying call. It's time for the government to get—come down from the clouds. It's time for them to listen to what the affected stakeholders are actually saying. Allow me to give additional details on what constituents are saying, Madam Speaker.

For the taxi industry, Bill 30 would drastically undermine their livelihoods. The changes in the legislation would introduce competition from ride-sharing companies—not saying that competition is a bad thing for the industry. One of the benefits is that we have a greater number of taxis available for Manitobans. The problem lies in the impact and the way this is being done.

Many in the industry today have invested 400 to 500 thousand dollars in the industry. Bill 30 would effectively reduce the value of this to a small fraction of the original amount. Madam Speaker, these individuals have put at risk the food on their table, the roof over their homes and their futures of their families. Imagine risking your entirely livelihood on a business, only to have it taken away by a process that you have had no role in determining how it will

work. To make matters worse, the legislation prevents any fair compensation for these individuals. In other words, this government chooses to absolve itself of responsibility for their role in the entire thing. Even our former leader, Rana Bokhari, who talked about changes to Uber, argued strongly that there had to be compensation.

What this government is doing is a blatant disregard to the hard work that individuals have put in and the money they've invested. This bill would put the lives of those in the taxi industry in undeserving hardships. It's a shame that this government is distancing itself from the problems of—their own legislation would make.

Another important theme, Madam Speaker, is fairness. Competition with the local taxi industry is not necessarily a bad thing, so long as it needs to be carried out in a fair and equal manner. The Manitoba Taxicab Board recommended that ride-sharing services should operate in Manitoba. However, there's a catch: any company must abide by the same standards and driver-screening requirements as regular drivers. The report also mandated ride-share vehicles be covered under the same insurance as taxis.

Other jurisdictions, recently examples in Toronto, have had problems with safety, and we need to be sure that they don't occur here. Requirements for safety and insurance have had positive outcomes in Manitoba. One taxi driver told me that he was dispatched to pick up an elderly person in the winter; he parked his vehicle away from the sidewalk and assisted the person to get into the taxi. In another instance, he helped a disabled person to get into and out of the taxi.

To ensure equality and fairness in competition, ride-sharing services and taxis should be subject to the same rules and regulations. However, this would not be the case with this bill. Bill 30 delegates the ability to regulate to the municipalities. But this means that there's no baseline of standards, and Manitobans are unsure of whether there is a uniform set of standards for their safety.

Madam Speaker, I think it's time for this government to come down from the clouds and get their feet on the ground. I think this government should not impose its own views on everyone. They need to see what's actually happening on the front lines and the grassroots, and they need to start listening, and that is why we are against this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Merci.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I would like to put a few words on this bill, and I think I already—during question period I already asked those questions, and I'm really concerned about what is happening over here because people spent about 300 to 500 thousand dollars on the permits. Those permits were gone up under the watch of taxi board.

So, previously, when I talked to previous minister and she was just saying they in government have nothing to do with that, but government has something to do with it. If somebody goes to buy the taxi from other person, and when they [*inaudible*] the taxi board, they will ask how much money—cash to you. And he might say a little bit low a rate. And they say no, no, you're not telling the truth. You are avoiding the tax. It—ongoing price is this. It means government was involved to bring that price from at one time during Gary Filmon about \$25,000. Now up to \$525,000.

So government was involved all the way. It means government has responsibility to compensate those owners who are—paid that amount of money. I don't think government—on the other hand, government is unfair to the taxi industry when they are putting the clause that they cannot sue them—cannot ask for compensation. That should be left open. If that's left open, it's up to the court to decide what to do. What they did in Australia, they went—overcame over there—they let Uber come in but those cities that allowed them to—they paid them a compensation.

So that's the way it should be. It's so unfortunate because the ministers did not want to listen. They didn't—the Premier (Mr. Pallister) did not want to listen. I wrote a letter to Premier so that I can sit with him and make him understand about the taxi industry because majority of the people in taxi industry from Indo-Canadian community. And they are every day ongoing talking to—they're talking to me. So I understand the taxi industry, how it works. And also, I would say why government—this government's responsible to bring that money up, because under Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, under business class, there are people who have come over here and they're here and they invest money in the taxi industry. They bought the taxis. So it's gone through the government. So I think government is responsible to bring those prices up and now they're responsible to pay the compensation.

If they don't pay the compensation—and I know sometimes even the media collude with the people, because sometimes immigrants are not liked that much through the media as the other people—other groups are. So I will really emphasize that government think hardly—think thoroughly, because this case will go to the court. If it goes to the court, it will cost money to the taxpayer, it will cost money to the government, it will cost money to the owners. So this is not just a laughing matter. I know when I was a *[inaudible]* talking about that. Some people, even including media, made fun of it. This is serious matter. It's a livelihood of the immigrant community and they are being attacked. I—at that time, I said why farmers can get compensation, why these people cannot get compensation?

And, sure, we need fair competition. But, at the same time, what we are doing over here, we can make money out of the taxi industry. Government can get funds. How it can work if you make ongoing price—either people can buy their taxi from the market or they can buy that permit from the taxi board. So say \$400,000 ongoing price or \$350,000 ongoing price. If they—a hundred taxis, more taxis are put into the market and government will make \$35 million. That \$35 million will go long way to help some other services.

* (18:30)

So why we cannot take advantage of that situation? Why we are so following the other provinces? Winnipeg is more than 60 per cent for sure population whole Manitoba. And if we follow the other provinces, why don't we simply save money, and we don't need the provincial government—just have city government and to have a federal government. Even go further than that, why we have even city governments, just have a federal government and that will save lots of money.

I think these ministers, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) should think about that and should think about that because one immigrant community is being really hit hard over here and they don't care. But also I think they should know this community is very politically active. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Saran: This community is very politically active. There are so many MLAs who have these people from this community. I think they should speak up. They should help it out, and the Premier

should think about the coming elections this will affect.

And so, when—let me give you an example, Madam Speaker. We get involved politically, and this leadership race—we—I say, on my behalf, we signed 900 members more than any other constituency. And they were—other political constituency signed only 560. We provided 87 delegates out of 93 delegates. That shows how much we are involved politically.

And I think it's not a threat; it's reality. And don't undermine, Madam Speaker—in—these—they're working in hard conditions, and sometimes they are being beaten up by the passengers. And sometimes—I think it will be a little bit more in that direction now because we have changed the role models. Role models—the more you build somebody, the more you do those kinds of stuff, the more chance, in later life, to be politically successful. That kind of success will put more kind of incentive to the people who will be riding and beating them up or call them their different names, because later, those people can become leaders; those people can become politicians, and so then they will become role models.

If that's the incentive in politics and that's the way politics is going, I think we are going to the ways in the third-world countries, where the goons, bullies, conspirators, criminals are successful in politics. And I'd urge, Madam Speaker, think about this—think about this—and rethink about this bill and be fair to the taxi-industry owners—taxi owners so that they can make their living. They'll spend lots of money; they brought money from there. That money, that funds will be wiped out. How many people will survive? They will have heart attack if somebody lose \$400,000. They will have heart attack. That's their safety. Where's their safety?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 30, The Local Vehicles for Hire Act. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I heard a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

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

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

Order, please. Order.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 30, The Local Vehicles for Hire Act.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk: Yeas 36, Nays 16.

Madam Speaker: I declared the motion carried.

* (19:00)

Bill 31—The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to the final designated, Bill 31, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act. And, to be clear, the minister has spoken, the critic has spoken, and

the question period has taken place. So, if there are any independent members that wish to speak to it, this is the opportunity.

If there are no questions, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 31, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: I heard a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please summon the members for a recorded vote?

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

* (19:30)

Order, please. Order.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 31, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Southdale), Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Smith (Point Douglas), Swan, Wiebe.

Clerk: Yeas 36, Nays 16.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 10, 2017

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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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