

**First Session – Forty-First Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Official Report**  
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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

| <b>Member</b>            | <b>Constituency</b>  | <b>Political Affiliation</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| ALLUM, James             | Fort Garry-Riverview | NDP                          |
| ALTEMEYER, Rob           | Wolseley             | NDP                          |
| BINDLE, Kelly            | Thompson             | PC                           |
| CHIEF, Kevin             | Point Douglas        | NDP                          |
| CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.     | Agassiz              | PC                           |
| COX, Cathy, Hon.         | River East           | PC                           |
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| CURRY, Nic               | Kildonan             | PC                           |
| DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.    | Charleswood          | PC                           |
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| FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.   | Morden-Winkler       | PC                           |
| GERRARD, Jon, Hon.       | River Heights        | Lib.                         |
| GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.   | Steinbach            | PC                           |
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| HELWER, Reg              | Brandon West         | PC                           |
| ISLEIFSON, Len           | Brandon East         | PC                           |
| JOHNSON, Derek           | Interlake            | PC                           |
| JOHNSTON, Scott          | St. James            | PC                           |
| KINEW, Wab               | Fort Rouge           | NDP                          |
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| 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                          |
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| REYES, Jon               | St. Norbert          | PC                           |
| SARAN, Mohinder          | The Maples           | NDP                          |
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 9, 2016

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

Please be seated.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** As previously agreed, would you please call the Committee of Supply?

**Madam Speaker:** The House will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

#### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

\* (10:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of Executive Council.

Does the honourable First Minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I do, Sir.

I am pleased to be here today, Mr. Chair and colleagues, to present the 2016-17 Estimates for the Executive Council.

We begin by introducing staff that are with me today, if I may. Do I invite them to come forward or do you? Oh, later? *[interjection]* So I do the opening statement and then introduce the staff? Okay.

On April 19th, Manitobans voted for greater openness, greater transparency and greater accountability, and we are doing our best as the new

government here to meet those expectations, beginning with our Throne Speech which laid out our plans for the upcoming session, continuing with our budget which provides a far greater level of transparency than under the previous government, and continuing today with this Estimates process.

Manitobans want leadership in addressing the significant fiscal problems that we face. We are providing that leadership. My office is leading by example. Estimated expenditures for Executive Council in the Budget 2016 are 4.2 per cent less than the amount budgeted last year by the previous government. And our new government is setting a higher standard in fiscal leadership and accountability, showing respect for Manitoba taxpayers who deserve a government that will spend their tax dollars wisely, with restraint, with care. That is what Budget 2016 does, sets a new course for our province: careful, prudent course that will lead to lower taxes, better services and a stronger economy.

For many years now, our government has been spending beyond its means, and that results in higher and higher accumulated debt and deficit increases annually plus ever-increasing taxes. That erodes Manitobans' confidence and trust in their government. Of course, it negatively impacts on the incomes that people enjoy in their own—as a result of their own efforts, their own work, and it jeopardizes our long-term ability to provide the services that Manitoba families depend upon.

Budget 2016 does protect front-line services for all Manitobans, and moves in the direction of protecting those services on a long-term basis so that they can be sustainably supported for future generations to enjoy as well. It moves our province in a safer and more prosperous direction.

The challenges facing our province are significant; they are enormous. In the past fiscal year, provincial spending exceeded revenues by more than a billion dollars, and that is more than double the \$421-million deficit that was originally projected when the previous government tabled its budget just a year ago. And that is meaning that expenditures were, on average, \$10 million more per week than was projected by that budget just one year ago. Ten million dollars more a week.

Now, over the past decade, projected budgets' expenditures rose rapidly each year, far beyond the rate of inflation, and those massive increases in projected expenditures were exceeded every single year by the actual spending of the previous government. As a result of that spending, our summary net debt doubled from \$10 billion to \$21 billion in just eight years. That's a deficit that is significant, and it puts our province in a precarious position, makes us vulnerable to an interest rate hike either through general increase in rates or through a further credit rating downgrade, and if that happens, our borrowing costs will increase significantly. High taxation rates make it difficult for Manitoba to compete for investments that create jobs and pay for front-line services.

The depletion of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund by the previous government impairs our ability to address emergencies such as floods or forest fires. Our increased reliance on revenues from the federal government and other provinces makes us vulnerable to reductions in federal transfers.

Manitobans expect responsible fiscal management from their government. They want a better approach than spending more every year and getting less, and they've given our new government a strong mandate to chart a better, safer course, and that is what we will do.

In terms of health care, we have seen a decade of dysfunction, debt and deterioration in our services, and Budget 2016 begins the process of repairing more than a decade of damage. It includes indexation of the basic personal exemption for the first time and of all tax brackets, as of January 1st, 2017, and we're doing this because we believe this is the fair thing to do and we believe in tax fairness for Manitobans.

\*(10:10)

Our budget provides a substantial increase in funding for health care over the current projections, and we are doing that because Manitobans need to rely on their new government to provide the medical care they need when they need it. And we've taken a small but important step in the direction of reducing our ambulance fees by half during our first mandate in this budget as well. And we do this because we believe that Manitobans should not be forced to choose between paying high ambulance fees and receiving the emergency medical care that they need.

We will be appointing a wait-times task force that will consult with front-line health-care providers

and others to develop a plan to reduce wait times in our health-care system, and we do this because Manitobans should not be forced to wait longer than all other Canadians for medical care.

And we will address our province's shortage of personal-care-home beds by developing a funding model that will fast track the construction of those beds in all regions of Manitoba. We do this because seniors should not be forced to spend weeks in hospitals waiting for a bed in a personal care home. Our failures in children's education fail our children. They rob them of their future. They threaten the productivity, competitiveness, and economic future of this province, and our budget increases funding for education and training above the rate of inflation, including a 2.55 per cent increase in funding for schools.

It provides support for new initiatives as well, and early years education, with a particular focus on improving young people's ability to read. And we do this because an investment in the future of our children is an investment in the future of our province.

We've also provided increased funding for the Department of Families. This increases our contribution to the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation's multi-year capital program, provides a full indexation to 75 per cent of median market rent through the Rent Assist program for low-income Manitobans who live in private rental housing. This will reduce wait lists for important services needed by children and their families, as well. Our government is making these investments because they'll improve the lives of many Manitobans who need our help the most.

Manitoba people have a reputation as being some of Canada's smartest shoppers, and they deserve a government that spends as wisely as they do. They expect their government to use public revenues effectively and efficiently as they must in their own lives to control the growth of spending, to deliver value for money, and we will do this by holding annual spending growth below 3 per cent, eliminating waste, duplication and overlap in government services, reducing the number of government departments, shrinking the size of Cabinet, dissolving the East Side Road Authority, reducing the number of untendered contracts, eliminating the subsidy for political parties, launching a fiscal performance review of all core government programs, initiating a comprehensive

review of health-care delivery that engages all stakeholders, including front-line workers, establishing a red-tape-reduction task force, reducing the amount of advertising that promotes government and increasing the amount that promotes Manitoba, and modernizing the governance of Crown corporations to eliminate political interference in their business operations.

Jobs and economic growth are the backbone of our government's plan to build a stronger, more prosperous Manitoba. We will help Manitobans grow the economy by increasing the competitiveness of our provincial government's operations, by being a principled and reliable partner by working in collaboration with the business community, working with indigenous Manitobans to allow them to become full partners in our society, facilitating improved access to venture capital, negotiating membership in the New West Partnership with the other three western provinces in order to reduce trade barriers and open up new opportunities for Manitoba companies, by investing more than \$1 billion annually in strategic infrastructure to address our inherited infrastructure deficit, creating a single access point for municipalities to access programming at the provincial level, developing a made-in-Manitoba climate action plan that fosters emissions reductions, retains investment capital and stimulates new innovation and clean energy businesses and jobs, indexing our income tax brackets to the rate of inflation, ending bracket creep, and establishing a relationship generally within our province. Government is not above the people, but rather beside them.

Our new government is committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada to undo the damage caused by a decade of deterioration and correct the course toward a safer more prosperous future. It will take time. It will not be accomplished overnight. It will take patience; it will take hard work; but the great thing about Manitobans is we aren't afraid of hard work. And our goal is to protect the vulnerable, support future generations. We believe Manitobans are strong people and we will emerge stronger together, and Manitobans know their best days are not behind them but ahead of them, and we are confident, Madam Speaker, that with the work and co-operation that we will share in among all Manitobans interested in building a better future, we can achieve these goals.

Thank you. Miigwech. Merci.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the honourable First Minister for those comments.

Does the interim Leader of the Official Opposition have any comments?

I recognize the interim Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Chair, I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for his opening statement. I congratulate the Premier and his party for the overwhelming victory in the last election. We recognize Manitoba-Manitobans want change and we respect that.

Each and every day, though, we are realizing the change that is happening is not the kind of change everyday Manitobans have expected. In the brief time that the Premier has been in government, one thing has become clear. On a daily basis we are seeing bizarre claims from the Premier combined with a complete inability to answer even the most basic questions. To make matters worse, we see his ministers following the same approach. Whether it relates to the revelation of his visits and assets in Costa Rica or the bogus claim that he had found \$122 million in budget savings, the pattern has been the same.

The Premier's accusations around the over \$1-billion deficit is patently wrong, as it throws into the total figure some \$143 million receivables from the federal government and over \$200 million on flood disasters assistance and environmental liability costs.

In the Premier's Estimates, we are going to be seeking answers on these and other important issues.

We will be seeking answers on why the Premier has moved so significantly to politicize the senior civil service of the province.

We will be seeking answers on why the Premier has made reckless comments about Bipole III that are threatening the UNESCO designation of the east side.

We'll be seeking answers on why the Premier has chosen to be a spokesperson for Bell Canada in supporting the sale of MTS to Bell instead of speaking out for Manitobans.

What we are seeing is a Harper style of governing. In fact, the Premier's stonewalling with

the media and members of the opposition comes right out of the Stephen Harper playbook.

We, in Her Majesty's loyal opposition, will welcome and co-operate with the government on policy, legislations and programs that will be of net benefit to all Manitobans.

Likewise, we will be vigilant, thorough and vigorous in opposing legislations that will disadvantage everyday and vulnerable Manitobans.

It is time the Premier (Mr. Pallister) takes his responsibility seriously and actually starts answering the serious questions that we'll be asking.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the interim Leader of the Official Opposition (Ms. Marcelino) for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is traditionally the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of line item 2.1.(a) and proceed with consideration of the remaining items referenced in resolution 2.1.

At this time we invite the First Minister's staff and staff from the official opposition to join us at the table. Once they are seated, we will ask the staff in attendance to be introduced.

**Mr. Pallister:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce Donna Miller, the Clerk of the Executive Council and Cabinet Secretary, who's with us this morning; and Ilana Dodd-Dadds—I'm sorry—who is the assistant deputy minister of Corporate Services in the Department of Finance. Corporate Services provides services to Executive Council, Finance and Civil Service Commission.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Does the interim Leader of the Official Opposition have any staff they'd like to introduce?

\* (10:20)

**Ms. Marcelino:** We have one here, Mr. Christopher Sanderson, policy adviser. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

Does the committee wish to proceed through these Estimates chronologically or have a global discussion?

**Ms. Marcelino:** We would prefer a global approach.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is it agreed—a global approach?  
[Agreed]

Thank you. It is agreed that questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Ms. Marcelino:** I would like to ask the Premier: Rick Mantey is shown in organizational charts and on the staff directory as a deputy minister to the Premier. Has he received an order-in-council, and what is his rate of pay?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'll get that information for you as soon as I possibly can, later today at the latest.

Yes to the order-in-council, but the salary amount I'm not exactly sure, so I'll get that for you.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Thank you. I would also like to ask the Premier: Did he hold a competition for Mr. Mantey, and what qualifications does the Premier think he holds?

**Mr. Pallister:** Similar competition to the one held for Eugene Kostyra, and in terms of the qualifications, I would say Mr. Mantey brings a wealth of experience both here in Manitoba and his work with Premier Wall in Saskatchewan that will commend him well to benefiting the people of Manitoba and the service of those people.

**Ms. Marcelino:** I would like to ask further clarification from the Premier on Eugene Kostyra.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, the member can provide me with more clarification on Mr. Kostyra than I can provide her with.

**Ms. Marcelino:** As the Premier is aware, Mr. Mantey was a long-time political staff in the government of Premier Gary Filmon. He most recently worked in the Brad Wall administration in Saskatchewan as Cabinet secretary.

Is the Premier aware that Mr. Mantey was put on probation following an expense scandal? I understand Mr. Mantey was later shuffled out of this important post.

**Mr. Pallister:** I don't accept the premise of the member's question but I do—I am aware of the allegations, absolutely.

**Ms. Marcelino:** At the time of this scandal, CBC reports that Mr. Mantey ordered \$7,000 in luxury transportation service for government ministers.

Does the Premier (Mr. Pallister) not agree this is a significant concern, and what assurances can he give that Manitoba taxpayers will be protected?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'm confident in Mr. Mantey's abilities. He has been a public servant for—I'll get the detail, as I committed to earlier for the member in respect of her previous question, but I know that he has been serving in the public service for in the area of close to 30 years, and so I'm cognizant that he brings considerable skills to his role.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Mr. Chair, the reason why I ask this question is obvious. The last time the Premier in government, the Cabinet secretary was involved in running the vote-rigging scandal. I think Manitobans have every right to be concerned about the way the Premier is politicizing the civil service.

Can he explain why he is filling the civil service with political figures?

**Mr. Pallister:** That's actually not the case; I don't accept the premise of the question. But I could, I suppose, if I wanted to, talk at length about Christine Melnick's involvement in organizing a partisan protest rally, the subsequent cover-up by the premier, her demotion from Cabinet as a result of disclosing that the premier and senior administration of the previous administration were fully aware of that attempt to politicize the civil service. I could also, in fact, speak at length about the record of the previous administration in actually importing people from various support groups to help in the leadership campaign right out of the Premier's office, but I choose not to do that.

**Ms. Marcelino:** The Premier made claims that he had found \$122 million in savings in the budget; so did his Finance Minister. Despite repeated requests, they have not tabled the list.

Will the Premier admit that the so-called savings were made up?

**Mr. Pallister:** I appreciate a question about savings coming from any member of the NDP that have never found any. In fact, following a campaign in which they made promises totalling over \$600 million in addition to the reality that they're run—they're—were in the midst of running a billion dollar deficit on top of that. It's heartening to hear a question about savings.

Our plan is, of course, to reduce the growth in the rate of savings. As you know, having read the Estimates book cover to cover, there are only two

departments in government that actually see a reduction this year. So there aren't cuts as the NDP had predicted in government services or in staffing, but there are plans in the works to reduce the growth in the rate of spending. The Department of Agriculture and my own Executive Council office have smaller budgets this year, and there are some staff reductions there involved. But, overall, our commitment is to maintain front-line services and get a handle on the growth in spending which has been running away at, overall, about two and a half times the rate of inflation for some years, resulting in a doubling of our debt in the last eight years and a decline in our credit rating. This has put us in a precarious position, and we have to address that runaway rate of growth in spending.

So, the number the member refers to is the projected deficit next year versus what it projects to be this year, and that's a pretty simple calculation the member can do if she would like. There are a number of ways to achieve that. Some sample examples have been given to members of the media and I'm sure they would like more. And the fact of the matter is that the results will speak far more than the predictions.

The previous administration predicted that it would do a number of things over the last number of years, and, in fact, failed in every single year to keep its spending under control. As a result, we saw a massive increase in our debt: close to triple since '99, massive increases in the risk that we have been put into now as a consequence of that. Even in the midst of declining interest rates and increasing supports from other levels of government, this is what went on year after year.

So the record of the previous government is a dismal one on maintaining its commitments. This was conveyed to us by the bond rating agencies last week when we had an opportunity to meet with them in an attempt to restore some sense of trust in the relationship. They told us that they doubted our numbers, because that was the record Manitoba had demonstrated to them over the years. That bothers me, and I'm trying to restore that integrity to our ability make projections which we keep.

So our plan is to keep our projections. The results will speak better, I think, to that than any projection comment I could make any further than that. But we are projecting a decline of approximately 12 per cent, year over year, in the amount of the deficit, and that is a step in the right

direction, I think, and an important one for our province.

**Ms. Marcelino:** We have at least three versions of the supposed savings: the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) ever-changing version, the Finance Minister's version and the version given to the media by his communications director.

Which one are Manitobans supposed to believe?

**Mr. Pallister:** The member refers to my ever-changing version. Perhaps she'd like to illustrate how my version is changed if it's ever-changing. Please elaborate so I can answer the question

**Ms. Marcelino:** I have another question, please.

Let's get this straight. At various times, the Premier and his minister have identified things like the \$17-million lapsed budget line as savings when it appears in every budget. He, at times, has identified the senior's tax credit as—tax credit clawback as a savings. This is an insult to seniors themselves.

Why did the Premier make up the existence of this \$122-million list?

\*(10:30)

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, again, the interim Leader of the Opposition put on the record that my version of the explanation that I'd given on the \$122-million lower deficit projection versus what we anticipate, and we'll know when the Public Accounts come out. All of us will know what the actual number is. Right now we can only speculate. It's certainly going to be a lot higher than the government projected a year ago. I think we all know that.

But, again, I'd invite the member—she's put on the record that my version has somehow changed, so I'd like her to explain how that is the case.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Mr.—Altem—Allum, the member for Fort Garry—the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** You know, I think this is a matter that goes right to the heart of the government's integrity, and you campaigned, Mr. Premier,—through you, Mr. Chair—on a platform of transparency and accountability. Your Finance Minister along with you went out and said that you had \$122 million in savings, then you went out to say that you had a list of such savings. We're asking you where the list is.

**Mr. Pallister:** I want to thank the member for the question, and I thank him for raising the issue of integrity.

It was that member who went around the province prior to the last election telling civil servants that they should be afraid, telling teachers that they would all be laid off and lose their jobs, actually, telling them on the doorsteps of their homes that they would lose their jobs in front of their children. This is an interesting way to campaign, and I think beneath contempt.

In respect of the number, we anticipate \$122-million reduction in the deficit year over year, a 12 per cent savings for Manitobans in the long term. That may not seem like much to the member, he's never been part of a government that ever reduced deficits significantly and certainly never part of a government that reduced taxes. So he may not be aware that this does matter to Manitobans. And we are going to keep our promises in respect of every aspect of our platform and that is a key part of it. Reducing deficits is important, moving back to balance is important.

Of course, the government of which the member is a part made claims in the election of '11 that they were not just on track. I think they said they were ahead of pace to balance the books by what, about three, four years ago, and then they changed that projection and said they needed another year, and then they changed again and said they needed two more, and then they changed again and said they needed a couple more. And now we know that this was a billion dollar deficit coming up this year, so they were getting further and further away from keeping their commitments in respect of balancing the books.

The credit rating agencies knew that, they warned them a couple of times, and finally they lowered the credit rating for the people of Manitoba costing the Treasury a lot of money and costing the City of Winnipeg money too.

So I appreciate the member raising the questions about integrity. It gives me the opportunity to clarify how that hasn't been the case under the government of which he was a Cabinet minister and under the government of which he was a part for quite a while.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Before I recognize the member from Fort Garry-Riverview, I'd like to remind all members to address their comments through the Chair and not directly using phrases like you.



**Mr. Allum:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know I find the Premier (Mr. Pallister) unnecessarily argumentative on, frankly, questions of fact. I would remind him, through you, Mr. Chair, that this is the Estimates process. This is not question period and the people of Manitoba have a right to know exactly what it is that the Premier and his Finance Minister are articulating with respect to their estimates.

So, Mr. Chair, we've asked the Premier quite clearly today to help us to understand the \$122 million—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is the member raising a point of order or just a question—leading to a question?

**Mr. Allum:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Allum:** For purposes of clarification, we have significant—we have time for a preamble in questions, no?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Allum:** Fine, precisely. So that's what—I was not raising a point of order. I was wanting to make sure that we understood, and we have a number of new members at the table here, that this is the Estimates process. This is not question period where the Premier (Mr. Pallister), at his own political risk, can deflect if he likes, but this is the Estimates process in which we're looking to get to the bottom of issues that are raised in the budget or articulated in the budget papers, and then are reflected in one way or another either in question period or through the media.

Now, we've asked the Premier, through you, Mr. Chair, for a direct, unargumentative question around an alleged \$122 million in savings.

So could the Premier clarify for us what's in that \$122 million savings and could he table for us a list of those savings as he said he would do?

**Mr. Pallister:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Are you done with that?

**Mr. Pallister:** Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** I'm sorry, was that the answer? Absolutely was the answer? Am I to, which, so absolutely—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Before—I have to recognize you.

**Mr. Allum:** Okay, so the Premier has answered with a one-word answer, absolutely, when we asked him here in the Estimates process to clearly articulate where the \$122 million in savings come from. There are in fact, Mr. Chair, three versions out in the public domain right now. We are looking for him, in this Estimates process—for him to clearly verbally articulate what the \$122 million savings are, and then, in addition to that, we're asking him to table the list that he says exists.

So he, I believe he answered question 2 with absolutely, so I would add on to that: when? But in the first instance we want him, today, verbally to articulate clearly what is the—is composed of the \$122 million in savings. Could he do that for us right now?

**Mr. Pallister:** Just to be clear, the member asked me if I could do that and I answered absolutely. So that was the question. The previous question wasn't as he restated it, the previous question was could I table, and I can. And now he's asked me to do it immediately, no, I'll do it later on. Happy to put together the information for the member.

**Mr. Allum:** Mr. Chair, the Premier's answers here defy explanation. In the budget process, when the budget was tabled we asked, the media asked, for a list. We told it would be forthcoming. It is now 10 days since the budget was tabled, the budget has, in fact, been passed, and he continues to stonewall on the provision of the list.

We do want a written list, but we're asking him here today, Mr. Chair, to clearly, verbally articulate where the \$122 million in savings come from, and simply saying he's refusing to answer isn't what this process is all about. He has an obligation, not only to this committee but to the people of Manitoba, in the Estimates process to clearly, verbally state for the record where this \$122 million is coming from.

Will he please do that now?

**Mr. Pallister:** It's great to see the member in Opposition because a year ago, when I asked the former premier numerous questions on numerous topics, I received no answers. Repeatedly asking questions, no answers. And there was no objection from the member at that time, and no educational, philosophical, professorial lectures to the members of the Legislature about how that was an important thing to do. Not at all. Quite the contrary. There was continued stonewalling on a number of fronts.

For example, I asked the previous premier, who had committed the year before, to make available the amount of severance payments to former staffers who had chosen not to support him the leadership race. He said he would, he said that they'd be available later in the Public Accounts. They are not in the Public Accounts. So the member didn't make those available. No objections whatsoever ensued from the member at that point in time. These were questions that were asked.

We asked questions in Estimates last year about a number of issues including the untendered contracts that were offered up to friends of the previous government by—in collaboration with members sitting here today who okayed those. We asked questions about the cover-up in respect of those things and still haven't received the report and evaluated the efficacy of the Tiger Dams. We still haven't still received information in respect of other contracts untendered and offered to supporters of the party that used to govern this province.

\*(10:40)

So the member's holier-than-thou attitude in respect of these issues is surprising and—well, not surprising, I suppose, but disappointing. I've already undertaken to put together a list for the member and so we'll do that. The detail in that list, I'm sure, will give the member ample opportunity to understand an issue that he has hitherto never understood. And that is that a government in Manitoba can actually undertake to find savings. Not just talk about doing it, but actually do it. And that's, I think, an important exercise to engage in, and the results will speak—be spoken to as the public accounts come out and we see whether we make progress or not. Our hope is that we can. We've inherited a mighty mess.

But the member ought not to pretend that he has some—he is somehow an authority on transparency or openness in this process because such is hardly the case.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, I have to tell you that I find the Premier unnecessarily argumentative in this particular back-and-forth we're having here where he's being asked a clear question in the Estimates process to directly and clearly articulate \$122 million of savings that he allegedly has found. And yet he continually deflects on the question. He's clearly refusing to answer. And then he's moving into rank personal insults and character assassination when we, as an opposition, have an obligation to get the—clearly stated on the record

what the government is trying to articulate with respect to an alleged \$122 million in savings.

There have been three stories at a minimum, but three stories put out in the public domain about these—about this alleged savings. What we would like him to do right now is to clarify for us which of those stories it is. And could he clearly articulate for the record, for ourselves in opposition, for his new members who are sitting here, who I think are probably wondering why the Premier's being so argument when we're clearly just asking for a matter of fact to articulate the \$122 million in savings and what it's composed of.

Will he please do that for us now?

**Mr. Pallister:** I appreciate the member acting as if he's being paid by the word, but he already got a yes from me, so I don't know why he keeps articulating the same question again and again.

**Mr. Allum:** We're asking, in the Estimates process, a tradition—a parliamentary tradition that goes back long before any of us were around, that talks about—asks—gives the opposition, on behalf of the people of Manitoba, to get through the minutiae of the budget, budget process, budget numbers.

This is what this process is designed for. This is not a process of deflection, nor is it a process to offer a rank personal insult across the table at a member opposite. We're simply asking him: will he tell us today, right now, verbally, what the \$122 million of alleged savings is composed of.

It's a simple question; could he please answer it, Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, I can tell the member that, in the realm of personal insults, he has some expertise and has demonstrated that repeatedly in the Chamber and elsewhere.

And I can also tell the member that when he gets a yes in Estimates he should take it as a yes. I've undertaken to provide him with the information. He wants details, so I don't want to give him general comment about categories without having the actual numbers attached to it. I want to give him the full detail that he's asking for, and I think that would help the discussion.

And I hope that gives the member some comfort that he's been a very effective questioner here in Estimates and that he's a most successful member of the opposition.

**Mr. Allum:** That would be an acceptable answer if I was digging deep into the minutiae of the budget which, admittedly, as a former—and very lucky to be Cabinet minister, didn't always have the numbers at hand. Sometimes it did require us to ask our department officials, even though they're sitting here today. Sometimes it would take us a little bit longer to get the answer on a matter of minutiae.

This is quite different, Mr. Chair. We're talking about a matter that's on the public record right now. It's not a surprise to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that we're asking about this. It's not something that's buried deep, deep, deep within the budget numbers or the budget papers. This is a matter that's been on the public record for several days now. It was something that the Premier committed to providing 10 days ago and still has yet to do so.

And so, while we wait for the written list, we're asking him, today, if he would simply and clearly break down the \$122 million in savings for us right now.

**Mr. Pallister:** Question's been asked repeatedly. I've answered it repeatedly.

**Mr. Allum:** Mr. Chair, I don't know why the Premier's being so dismissive in his answers to questions that are a matter of public interest, are on the public record. He's dismissing the questions as though, for some reason, we're not in a position to ask or we shouldn't be asking. I think he has an obligation right now, because not only are we, the opposition, interested, the media's interested in it and the public is interested.

So, while we look forward to the list that he will provide—and, by the way, he has still yet to offer when that list will be made public—and I would ask him to answer that question clearly.

What we're asking him today, right now, this moment, is to put on the record for the Estimates where the savings are. He says there's \$122 million. Could he please break it down for us right now?

**Mr. Pallister:** I've undertaken to answer the member's question in detail and will do so.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, it's like a very weird game of table tennis going on here right now where we put the ball over the net and ask the Premier to respond an answer and instead he provides a dismissive answer in return.

That's not what the Estimate process is, Mr. Chair. That's not how, as honourable members,

we conduct ourselves, either in this place or in the Chamber.

What we're asking the Premier, now, is to clarify between the three stories that are currently on the public record, to clarify which one he holds to and could he please break down for us right now what the \$122 million is composed of?

I remind him, through you, Mr. Chair, this is the Estimates process. This is where his obligation to be—provide more detailed answers is the place for it to be asked and to be answered. If he's suggesting to this committee that he's not interested in the Estimates process or he's somehow above it, then he should say so.

But for right now we're asking a question of public importance that's on the public record, that is not a surprise to anyone, that has been in the public domain for the last 10 days. They issued press releases on these kinds of matters. They boasted about it. The media, the opposition and members of the—citizens of Manitoba all want the Premier to answer this question right now.

Could he please break down the \$122 million of savings for us?

**Mr. Pallister:** Again, if the member is out of questions and wants to just keep asking the same one, I understand that. But it would signify a considerable lack of preparedness on his part. I've undertaken to give him the information that he seeks, will do so.

I should remind him, when he speaks of explanations that confuse him, that that could be more in him than in the explanations.

We have committed to reducing the amount of the deficit. We've committed to reducing it year over year from the previous all-time high that his Cabinet left us, of approximately \$1 billion, by about 12 per cent. That's a significant undertaking. It involves finding reductions and savings in proposed spending in various categories.

There is no one easy way to do that, so the minutiae the member has requested I hope he would understand would take some time for me to put together. But I will put it together for him so he has a better understanding. And I encourage him, as he's already alluded to, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Chair, I'm sorry—these are important proceedings, and I want to be forthcoming with the information and have undertaken to do so. So in his inability to take a yes

for an answer, I don't think he's doing a real service to the benefit of this process for any Manitoban, frankly. But that would just be my view.

\* (10:50)

**Mr. Allum:** Well, Mr. Chair, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) suggested that the lack of preparedness is on our part. I would suggest to you quite strongly that the lack of preparedness is on the part of the Premier here, who is flatly—flatly—refusing to answer a direct question in the Estimates process. The fact of the matter is, he went out into the public and made a public claim about \$122 million in savings, and now he's refusing to back it up. And so in this process today, now, we're asking for a general—we're asking for, if not the specifics, then a general overview of where those savings came from. What are the categories? Where do they come from? Where did he find it?

We'll look at the specific detailed list when it's tabled. By the way, Mr. Chair, remind you, could he tell me when he's going to table that list?

But in the interim, in the meantime, this moment, right now, could he please provide us with some clarification for the three stories that are currently on the public record given by himself, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) and their communications person?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, there we go, a little progress. The member's asked for general categories, so I can certainly give him those. If he wants further detail, I've already undertaken to give him that.

So in terms of general categories, reduce—reductions in the government's advertising budgets will be undertaken. This is something that this particular administration has led the country in, top province to promote itself. However, we'll take those savings, and we plan to invest those in increasing tourism in our province. So we will actually be reallocating the bulk of those savings into the tourism promotion side of the budget and working in partnership with various agencies, individuals and groups around the province who want to see more people come here. We've got a beautiful province, we want to promote it and that's what we're going to be investing in.

In terms of efforts to stay out of the New West Partnership that the member was part of—in fact, he's denied there is such a thing—we are making efforts to get into the New West Partnership. We'd like to see increased co-operative approaches taken in respect to

promoting trade and doing business with our partners to the west and also nationally and believe we can do both these things simultaneously. And so we are working very hard to continue, and I want to compliment my predecessor, the premier, on his efforts to reduce barriers in a number of categories nationally, and I'm going to continue to do my best to see Manitoba move back to the lead in those negotiations. We believe there are some savings to be achieved there.

In terms of the seniors' tax credit, it's been well reported; I know the member's fully aware of the changes there. The previous administration's shameless efforts to try to buy the seniors' vote with a unkeepable promise, irresponsible promise to seniors to quintuple their tax credits just prior to an election, when they failed to do that significantly over 17 years, was something that I think was just a sad example of desperation more than it was good public policy.

Our efforts in that respect are—have been well reported. I know the member's familiar with them as there have been questions in question period; I expect his colleagues are fully aware of that. We think that targeting that benefit to lower income seniors will benefit themselves and their families and help them to stay in their homes longer, and we think it's a wonderful benefit, really, to assist them. But we do think that it's not, you know, a very good thing on the record of the previous administration, that they would make that promise when they knew that they couldn't keep it without stealing money from those very people in the future and their children and grandchildren; running up the deficit as they did to the levels that it's at is almost without historical precedent.

In respect of the child protection issues, we have legislation, which I hope can get unanimous support in the House, that we believe will increase greater co-operative approaches within the departments. We think that this may well be a cost saving, but most importantly, it will be a savings in respect of the children who are in care, many of whom have had to repeat their stories again and again of abuse and neglect to various agencies because there aren't provisions for the sharing of information among various departments. This is something that was unaddressed by this administration for years and years as they built up various silos of service that didn't function well to take care of the children—ever-growing number of children in care.

In terms of the government promotion, I should mention the signage budget alone, Mr. Chair, in the area of \$2.5 million spent on signs the government put up all over the province to promote themselves as opposed to simply filling potholes with the money. We plan to direct the money towards more effective use.

Sole source contracts—we're going to be greatly reducing, and it is our hope—greatly reducing the number of sole source contracts because that does cost additional money. I have to explain this to the member—

**Mr. Chairperson:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but the honourable First Minister's five minutes is up on that question.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, Mr. Chair, never has so much been said in five minutes, and yet so little articulated in terms of the line of questioning we're on.

We know what the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) political agenda is and we know how he feels about us and he's made that crystal clear.

We're asking for an explanation from him today, now, about \$122 million that he claimed to have saved in this budget, that the Finance Minister claimed to have saved in this budget. And what I asked him was, if he couldn't specifically break down each individual item, to at least provide us a general categories of the breakdown. And I want it put on the record, Mr. Chair, that he's flatly refused to do so in our one hour this morning, and I'm suggesting to him quite strongly that when he comes back this afternoon, either that he be better prepared or have the list in hand when he comes today so that we have something more to talk about.

But, for now, we're asking him one last time to clarify among the three stories that are in the public domain right now, which one he holds to. What elements are composed in the \$122 million of savings? Could he break down those numbers for us right now, Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Pallister:** And I appreciate the member raising this again and, as I've undertaken giving the detail, he did invite me to get into the general categories, which is exactly what I did for five minutes a moment ago when I was outlining a number of the categories where we would find savings.

For example, I referenced the seniors' tax credits specific area. I referenced child protection—another category, referenced trade in respect of the New

West Partnership—that was another example I gave. I also referenced tourism promotion and specifically that is another category I referenced, and I look forward to referencing some more now.

I do think, though, that it's important to understand the previous administration did spend a lot of money promoting itself. I understand it was the first ranking province in the country to do that in terms of multimedia advertising campaigns. Even, you know, if you go to a movie once in a while, you'd see the government promoting itself at the movies, all of this using taxpayers' money, general revenue, not NDP money—taxpayers' money, general revenue.

So we think there's a considerable savings to be had if Manitobans have a government that doesn't spend so much money promoting itself. We think that will actually be a good category of savings.

We do think, though, it's important to promote the province, and so we will be investing in promoting the province because we think that that's a province worth promoting.

The previous administration saw fit to do a lot of extra travelling. We're going to be reducing ministerial travel. There's another specific example. I see the member's not listening, but he may not get this, but it is important to take trips that benefit the people of the province, not necessarily just to fly up to The Pas and try to buy votes in a leadership race, as an example, okay.

It's important also to understand, as I am sure the member is growing in his understanding, that Manitobans want a government that spends money the way they do—carefully, shops well. The previous administration spent a considerable amount of money on sole source contracts. It announced the sole source purchase of a helicopter, and just days prior to the 2011 election, to much ballyhoo, as I recall—highly promoted, which the Auditor General commented on in some detail.

Also, by doing a number of these sole source contracts with friends, it created a reputation, and a growing reputation within the structures of procurement within the government, that it didn't care about value. It sent that message throughout the organization, and I believe that that's not Manitoban, frankly. Manitobans shop hard with their money and they want good value. So we're going to be invigorating our procurement practices within

government. This will save money. We'll get better value for the money that we spend.

These are all examples of how we get better value for money and how we move towards a lower deficit.

In terms of infrastructure we have a strategic plan in development which will focus on investing on projects that provide a return on investment, not necessarily just a visible advertising—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The time being 11 a.m., I am interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon following the conclusion of routine proceedings.

### JUSTICE

\* (10:00)

**Madam Chairperson (Colleen Mayer):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Justice.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I do.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and welcome to your new role here. This is going to be an interesting time through our Justice Estimates and I'm very much looking forward to this.

It's an honour and a privilege as Minister of Justice and Attorney General to introduce the 2016 and '17 budgetary Estimates for Manitoba Justice. These budgetary Estimates reflect the new government's commitment to restoring fiscal discipline in a responsible manner while ensuring the protection of front-line services for all Manitobans.

I want to start off today by welcoming my new critic to the portfolio. I certainly know that he is very educated with respect to the Justice system of our province having been the former Justice minister and Attorney General, and I very much look forward to a dialogue back and forth with him and I welcome him to his role.

Manitoba's new government is reducing the number of government departments to reduce administration—administrative duplication and costs.

The Crime Prevention branch has moved from the former Children and Youth Opportunities Department to the Community Safety Division of the Department of Justice.

The Protective Services branch has been moved from the Department of Infrastructure to the Community Safety Division of the Department of Justice.

The Consumer Protection Division has been moved from the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage as a division within the Department of Justice.

These moves streamline government and align the branches and divisions with like responsibilities within the Department of Justice.

The Innovation and Restorative Justice branch was created to co-ordinate the work of these two areas, recognizing that improving efficiencies in the criminal justice system cannot occur without providing additional responses to deal with the problems faced by people that bring them into conflict with the law. As such, restorative justice must be a viable alternative to, and enhancement of, the traditional court process.

Within these transfers from the departments, Justice's staffing complement has increased by 232 full-time-equivalent positions, and its budgeted expenditures are increased by \$18,557,000.

**Public safety:** This government is committed to making sure we invest in front-line services as we restore fiscal responsibility. This budget therefore includes \$325,000 in funding for three additional RCMP positions to provide provincial policing service to the Sioux Valley Dakota First Nation, which has resolved to opt out of the First Nations policing program and the services of the Dakota Ojibway Police Service.

**Victim services:** Victim services is another vital area where this government is increasing investments in front-line services with a total of \$232,000 in increased grant funding going to five different agencies providing services to victims of crime.

**Access to justice:** This year we are pleased to continue our partnership with the federal government through the simplified family initiative or SFI fund. We have embarked on a pilot project with an investment of \$201,000 through the SFI.

The Supporting Families Pilot Project Fund is a part of the larger fund that is intended to support

innovation and family law programs. The main fund supports research, innovative practice and front-line services such as child support recalculation service, family conciliation, the family justice resource centre and the Canadian divorce registry. This is fully recoverable funding that supports front-line services to Manitobans in a high-conflict area of the law.

This budget includes \$44,000 in funding to establish a senior JJP program. Judicial Justices of the Peace perform a range of essential functions within the criminal justice system that require judicial independence. This level of independence means it is not possible to have temporary coverage in the event of illness or any other exigency. There has been increasing pressure on JJPs as a result of retirements, increased turnover and increasing workloads. The senior JJP program will make retired JJPs available to provide temporary coverage as needed. This program is expected to assist with resolving the backlog in traffic court.

**Consumer protection:** This budget recognizes the importance of improving delivery of a wide range of programs and services encompassed in a Consumer Protection Division. Citizens expect the—that online and mobile services will be made available to them. Budget 2016-17 provides for investment in technology to move forward with online applications for certificates such as birth, death and marriage certificates and registrations in the Vital Statistics Agency.

This budget provides resources to support implementation of The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (High-cost Credit Products). This legislation added a category to The Consumer Protection Act for high-cost credit products, together with licensing requirements, for business and individuals who provide this type of credit product in Manitoba either through physical location or over the Internet.

\*(10:10)

We are also providing resources to support implementation of The New Home Warranty Act, particularly with the creation of an easy-to-use, public, online registry to allow Manitobans to look up the address of any home registered in the system to find out information regarding the builder and warranty coverage. This will help to protect new homebuyers from having to pay the cost of construction-related deficit-defects after moving into the new home.

And because this is a question that often comes up in—under Consumer and Corporate Affairs in the past, I am extremely happy to report that Liam and Emily are the most popular names based on Vital Statistics Agency data. So I thought I would share that with everyone today before I actually get the question.

In conclusion, it has been an honour to be able to present the 2016-17 budgetary Estimates for the Department of Justice. Justice has a vital mission: to ensure that Manitobans live in a safe and just communities and to strengthen public confidence in government and in the administration of justice. These budgetary Estimates begin restoring the department to a more sustainable path that will allow it to fulfill that mission better than ever before while also respecting the value that Manitobans are entitled to receive in exchange for their tax dollars.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** Yes, I do.

It's a pleasure to lead questions on Justice Estimates. I will tell you it's better on the other side of the table, but I'll start from this side for the first time.

I appreciate this is the minister's first opportunity to go through the Estimates process as the minister of course, we all appreciate she was appointed just a few weeks ago. So I will certainly, in the course of our time together, have a large number of factual questions, and I know that there's a lot of excellent staff here who either have the answers at their fingertips or know where it's located. And I think it's understood that there will be some information not readily available, but as long as the department will do its best to obtain it, I think we'll be able to go through Estimates in a pretty effective and useful way.

In past Estimates we've developed a few useful practices which I hope will continue. As the critic, I'll do my best to let the minister know which areas I expect we'll be moving through. We know that the staff at Justice are very, very busy and we don't want them sweltering away with us more than they have to. Today I expect I'll begin with some more general questions. The plan would be to move into

corrections and Community Safety, which is by far the largest item in the Justice Estimates, then move on to Courts, Criminal Law, Civil Law and Consumer Protection. As the minister will find out and as the critic is already anticipating, there's sometimes questions that don't fall neatly into any of those areas, and we'll do our best.

The commitment I'm asking for from the minister is simply to try and provide the answers as soon as possible. In past years, it's worked well if there is information that can be gathered overnight or the next morning, the minister has generally been able to put those things on the record to allow us to move forward.

In answering questions, I certainly want information, and there will be a lot of it requested. But I don't want it to be a make-work project for the department and for the staff. If there is a similar and more efficient way to provide the information, I don't have any difficulty with having a discussion about that to make sure we can move through as efficiently as possible.

There will be a number of areas where it's fair for the minister to receive a lot of advice from her staff. I will have a number of broader questions. I don't really want to call them philosophical questions, but some questions about the new government's direction and this minister's direction on a number of areas dealing with justice that, I believe, are very important to Manitobans.

There weren't a lot of hints in the Throne Speech. There was really nothing about anything in the Justice portfolio. I've read through the mandate letter dated May 3, 2016. There is not a lot of specific direction dealing with crime prevention or public safety. And as I put on the record yesterday, there's not much in the budget speech dealing with crime prevention and public safety. So I will be asking the minister to, hopefully, fill in the blanks, give us her plans in this fiscal year so I can understand her approach and the government's approach to the Justice portfolio. There's been some sweeping promises made by this new government and I need to understand how it will apply to the Department of Justice.

I do believe that the minister's been handed some very good tools to try and move forward with a better and more effective justice system in Manitoba. The Restorative Justice Act, of course, has been passed. I will hope we have good, solid discussion about how we can see restorative justice, and

everything it brings with it, expanded across the province to try and get better outcomes. I do want to hear the minister's views on some of the more innovative things that happened. I know there is—there have been efforts over the past couple of years to provide a more effective justice system and I certainly want to know the commitments of this minister to making those things happen.

So with that in mind, Madam Chairperson, we're prepared to move on to questions.

**Madam Chairperson:** We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 4.1(a) contained in resolution 4.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I'd like to start off by introducing Julie Frederickson, who's the Deputy Minister of Justice, and I will ask her to please introduce the rest of the staff.

And again, so Julie Frederickson is here as my deputy minister. We also have Julie Mazzon, Greg Graceffo, Shauna Curtin, Irene Hamilton is here, Michele Jules, Gail Anderson and David Greening, here with us today. And thank you all for being here with us today.

**Madam Chairperson:** Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or have a global discussion?

**Mr. Swan:** It's my hope that, as has been the tradition, that we proceed with the Estimates in a global manner.

**Madam Chairperson:** Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

It's agreed when the questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Swan:** I do welcome the staff here, many of whom I have had the opportunity to work with.

I will start off with some general questions for the minister about the makeup of her office. Who is the minister's special assistant?



**Mrs. Stefanson:** I too want to welcome all the staff, and I want to thank them for all of the hard work that they have done. We've worked on a very short time frame and it's been, you know, it's been very difficult I know for all of you, and I just really appreciate all you've done to make sure that we could meet the deadlines of bringing in this budget. So thank you for that.

And again I want to thank the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) for his question.

My special assistant's name is Phil Joannou.

\* (10:20)

**Mr. Swan:** I don't want his full resume or anything, but could you just tell me a little bit about his background and what he brings to the role as the special assistant?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, Phil has worked very extensively politically in—across the country. He's worked in opposition with us for a couple of years and has done extensive research where I've had the opportunity to work with him on various portfolios that I've held in opposition, and I think he brings a tremendous skill set to my office.

**Mr. Swan:** Does the minister have an executive assistant?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, I do.

**Mr. Swan:** And who is that, and do they work out of your constituency office or do they work in the building?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, I have a constituency assistant, Jillian Currie, who works out of my constituency office, and I have an executive assistant who works with me, and this is just—he just started—*[interjection]*—sorry, it's Ethan Cabel. Sorry.

**Mr. Swan:** And does Mr. Cabel work out of the Legislature or does he work in your constituency office?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, he works out of the Legislature. He just started with us yesterday.

**Mr. Swan:** Does the minister have any other political staff, a special adviser or an intake co-ordinator or any position like that?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** No.

**Mr. Swan:** And are there any members of Cabinet communications, or whatever the new name might

be, whose position is housed in the Department of Justice?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** No.

**Mr. Swan:** Are there any policy staff whose position—when I say policy, I mean providing policy to Executive Council, not just within the Department of Justice—whose position is housed in the department.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I don't believe so, no.

**Mr. Swan:** Has anyone in Cabinet communications, or whatever it may be called now, been assigned to work for you as Justice Minister?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, actually, we all work together as a team. There's been various members of Cabinet communication who have been assigned to me, but mostly for right now it's changing a little bit right now as we're going through—I'm sure you can appreciate we're new. We're going through various staffing throughout Cabinet communications, and so I've worked with various members and I think we all sort of work together as a team.

**Mr. Swan:** Can the minister confirm that there's three non-political secretarial or administrative staff in her office in the building?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, there are.

**Mr. Swan:** I would like to ask just a little bit about travel. I understand the minister has already made a trip to Ottawa, and there's no criticism of that, just so that's clear. I know the minister will be reporting in the normal course. Did anyone accompany the minister to Ottawa for that trip?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I actually should clarify. I never actually went to Ottawa. I think what the member is referring to is that I presented to a committee in Ottawa on Bill C-10, and I actually did that right here from the Legislature over video conference. We are a government that is very cognizant of trying to save taxpayer dollars, and we felt that that was the best way to do that. And I and a few of my colleagues have had—or a couple, at least, have had an opportunity to speak to various standing committees in Ottawa on a number of bills that are going through Parliament right now.

And so we believe, you know, from time to time, it'll be necessary to go and meet with various counterparts in Ottawa. But as it stands right now, I have not been to Ottawa in the last while. As a matter of fact, I've been right here at home ever

since, right through the election, ever since that time. So I have not really travelled at all other than within the province.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I do thank the minister for that. I understood it was actually a trip to Ottawa, but I accept that it's perfectly reasonable to be able to communicate through teleconference, and I'm sure the minister is aware that I was able to do that a number of times. At first you had to go to the courthouse, but you're—we're able to do it right from the Legislature.

So, just so it's clear, I'm not criticizing the minister on that front, and I trust that if there is something important enough for her to travel to Ottawa that she can do that without an expectation of complaint by the critic.

I presume the minister, though, does plan to attend in person the next Justice ministers meeting—when I say Justice ministers, the federal-provincial-territorial meeting of Justice ministers across the country.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, it's my understanding that that takes place in—sometime in October or November, usually, every year. I have been in discussions with my deputy minister about that. It is my intention at this stage to attend that on behalf of our province. I believe it's important that—particularly because I'm new to this role in our province, that I consult with people from my counterparts in other parts of the country. So it is my intention at this stage to attend that as well.

And I know our deputy ministers have all just met across the country recently at the beginning of June and they had some very good deliberations there as well, and I look forward to meeting with—I've already met my counterpart in Saskatchewan; I look forward to meeting with the rest of them in person at that—at those meetings.

**Mr. Swan:** And certainly I do encourage the minister to make every effort to attend. It is important to put Manitoba's concerns on the record. Manitoba has punched above its weight in my view in terms of setting the agenda and trying to get things done, not always with success, and we'll talk about some of those issues in the Estimates. But I certainly do encourage the minister to attend.

The last time Manitoba hosted the conference, I believe was in 2006—I know it travels across the country, and generally provinces and territories take turns. Does the minister have any idea if Manitoba

plans to try to host that meeting in the next year or two?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Thank the—my critic for the question, it's an important one. We obviously want to be promoting Manitoba. It has been a little while since they have been here, and I know certainly the one for this fall has been scheduled for Nova Scotia. And I think—I believe—I'm not sure what the entire process is for making that happen, but I will certainly be more than welcoming to all of my counterparts across the country and promoting Manitoba as a great place to come, and we would love to be able to host that again.

**Mr. Swan:** I encourage the minister to do so, keeping in mind of course that things can change and that issues can arise which requires a trip to Ottawa or other travel like that. Does the minister at present plan any other ministerial travel in this fiscal year?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Just to clarify, is the member talking about out-of-province travel?

**Mr. Swan:** Yes.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I don't have anything on the radar as of right now, but things are changing on a daily basis it seems these days, as we are—you know, as I'm new to this, and I also have another role as Deputy Premier as well, and so there's various things that do come up. Certainly, I know when I spoke to committee on Bill C-10, that came up very quickly but is a very important thing for us to do. And I want to thank the member, my critic, for supporting our resolution, our motion yesterday before the Manitoba Legislature. I think that that was a very important signal to send to Ottawa, that we stand together, all parties, in the Manitoba Legislature, and supported that motion unanimously. I think that sends a great message to Ottawa and I hope that they listen.

So, you know, as it stands right now, I don't have any—as it stands right now, I have no plans to travel outside the province.

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Swan:** Has any direction been given by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or by Executive Council or by the clerk to ministers dealing with their travel out of province?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I haven't been given any directive as of yet, no.

**Mr. Swan:** Have there been any new directives given by you or by anybody else to the department respecting travel since April 19 of this year?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, there—certainly, we are a government that was elected on fiscal responsibility, I believe, and we are looking at various ways to streamline expenditures within departments, especially in the area of travel. And so a memo has—I believe there is a memo that has circulated. But it's—it wouldn't prevent travel from taking place. It would just suggest that there's going to be a mechanism in place to ensure that there is—that it's very important for that travel to take place. So we'll be—we'll be scrutinizing all travel within the department.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I can assure the minister that that would not be something new. I know as minister I was actually—I had to personally sign off on any out-of-province travel for any Justice employee. And I remember one occasion having to sign an overnight travel claim for someone from Brandon to travel down to Minot who told me that they were going to be sharing a room and they would be taking a lunch with them. So I know it's already been scrutinized pretty carefully. Would the minister provide a copy of the memo that's been provided to the department regarding travel?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, as I understand, this has already been, I think, discussed in the media, and there was, I believe, somehow, the media had a—there was an article on that. I don't—I think it is probably possible for the member to get it through other sources. But we're happy to—I'll just check with the department and see about providing you with that.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that. Have any new directives been given to the department respecting vacancy management since April 19th of this year?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I think it's a similar process to what has taken place in the past where any of the employees would have to go to Treasury Board for approval except—with the exception of those that are exempt.

**Mr. Swan:** So just to clarify, as of right now, the minister is saying that there's no change in the way that vacancy management or filling vacancies are being treated than the existing practice?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** It's the same vacancy management process that's been used in the past.

**Mr. Swan:** Does the minister plan to issue any new directives to the department or any division or area within her portfolio respecting vacancy management in this fiscal year?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** You know, we certainly have ongoing discussions about staffing and it's very important, and of course we have already said that we are very cognizant of wanting to protect front-line services, so we will have ongoing discussions with respect to that area.

**Mr. Swan:** Has the minister been appointed to the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I think just—we are fairly new in our positions. It's a new government. We're in the process of reviewing how government is structured, so there will be various committees of Cabinet that are set up, various committees across government that will be set up, and we're just in the process of putting those together now, still.

**Mr. Swan:** So, I'll take from that answer that the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet has not been struck at all.

Right now the law is that there is to be a committee, and I think most people would agree that Justice is a department responsible for policies, programs, or services that directly impact the lives of children.

Is it the minister's position that there's not going to be a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I certainly—you know, Healthy Child initiatives are very important to our government, but I don't believe that that is within the purview of my responsibilities to make that decision. So—but certainly I do know that it is an area that is a priority for our government and we will structure any—we will structure it in any way that would be appropriate to fulfill those responsibilities.

**Mr. Swan:** I would—I'd let the minister know that the Healthy Child Community of Cabinet, which is called for by legislation, has been very useful, not only for the minister, but for the deputy minister to attend. I appreciate Cabinet is now smaller, so I expect there might be fewer people around the table, but when it comes to issues regarding the safety of children, the development of children, it's actually very helpful to have various ministers who have their own responsibilities and their own obligations sitting around the table to hear what their colleagues have to

say and to work together on getting better outcomes for children.

I can also say it's very helpful to have the deputy ministers whose job is to carry out the administration of the department to be part of those discussions, to make sure that things happen for the benefit of children.

So I'm concerned from the minister's answers that it doesn't sound like establishing the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet is a priority. It is a requirement under the legislation. I don't know if we'll be seeing an act to repeal the need for that committee, but it is a concern and I hope the minister will use her voice around the Cabinet table to make sure that committee is struck so that Justice can have a voice at the table at working together and making things better for children.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And I want to thank the member for the statement. Certainly, Healthy Child initiatives are very important to our new government, very important to me. I've got children of my own and I do know that having been in opposition and an MLA for, you know, the last 15 and a half years, I know that there's been many, many children who have fallen through the cracks of our child-welfare system that need to be protected. I think that has been a priority of our government and will continue to be.

\* (10:40)

And so we will work together. I know my colleagues in Cabinet, my colleagues in caucus, we will all work together to ensure that we protect, we do everything we can in our powers to protect children in our province. It's absolutely a priority for our government.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I appreciate the minister's comments. For example, with child welfare there are strong correlations between things the minister is responsible for in Justice, what the Minister for Families is responsible for, what the Minister of Education is responsible for.

So I do believe that it would be a strong message by this government to get the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet struck as soon as possible, as the government's required to do, so that we can have some confidence these issues are going to be dealt with.

Is there an Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet that's been struck?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, and again, I thank the member for these questions. I do believe that it would probably be more appropriate to ask these questions in executive committee, that I—it is not under my purview to set up committees of Cabinet.

Of course, I do say that these are very, very important areas to us. They are priorities for our government. We have ministers responsible for those areas. We will work together to ensure the safety of children and safety of those in our indigenous communities, and that is the approach that we will take. We will be working with stakeholders all across this great province of ours to ensure the protection and safety of all Manitobans.

**Mr. Swan:** Thank you, but the question: Is there an Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet now?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, again, I'll say to the member, I think that question is more appropriately asked in the executive committee. Again, I am not—it is not under my purview to set up committees of Cabinet.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, now, I appreciate that the minister may not want to talk about—may acknowledge it's not for her to set it up. The question is: Is there now an Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** You know, these are—again, you know, we will work together. Our Cabinet will work together to ensure that we protect and honour the safety of all Manitobans. Various committees of Cabinet will be set up, I'm sure, in due course. I am, you know—and I know that that will happen.

I think that the member needs to respect the fact that we've been in for a very short period of time. I'm not sure what the overall structure will be. That, again, is not under my purview.

But I think that these are very important issues that he brings forward and I will make note of them.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, and just to follow up on that, I'll take it from the minister's comments that there is no such committee now in existence and, if there is, the minister is not a member.

The previous government had a commitment to not just co-operating with but trying to be a leader as when we move ahead with the national inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. And that committee and some of the individuals working for that committee played a major role in making sure that Manitoba has a strong voice.

Which—is this minister now responsible for Manitoba's involvement in the national inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, I will have a role in that as—along with my colleague, the minister responsible for municipal and indigenous relations. My perspective would be, I guess, on the legal side, and hers would be more on the operational side.

But this is something that we will work together. This goes across pretty much, you know, all government departments where we will all have a role in how we work together with various people within the indigenous community to ensure that we move forward on this issue.

So I thank the member for this question.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I do agree that the serious issues being raised by this inquiry do cut across a number of governments.

But I'm just unclear. Does the minister say the ultimate responsibility then is going to be the minister responsible for—and I cannot remember the name—for municipal affairs and indigenous affairs?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Again, we'll take a collaborative approach to how we deal with this.

I do believe for right now it is the minister responsible for municipal and indigenous relations that will take the lead. But certainly there's a very important component when it comes to the legal aspect of this, where we will work together—the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding). It really does go across many different government departments, so we will take a collaborative approach to dealing with this issue.

**Mr. Swan:** Is there anything in the Justice Estimates for this year that would include any involvement by the Department of Justice in making sure that Manitoba fully participates on behalf of our citizens but on behalf of all Canadians in this inquiry?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And this is something we need to work together. This goes across governments, and certainly the federal government has indicated that they are going to be putting \$40 million towards this initiative across the country, and we will work together with our federal counterparts to ensure that we have full access to the funds that we deserve here in Manitoba.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I thank the minister for her answer. It seems to me this morning she's making the case

why there needs to be the Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet established as soon as possible. I agree with her, that these issues are serious and they cut across a wide number of government departments. Certainly, the answers given this morning give me great concern that these issues may fall through the cracks. They may not have the attention of any one Cabinet minister in this government and, given the reality of Manitoba, I think that would be a great disappointment, and it would also not provide a strong voice for Manitoba at this very, very important inquiry.

So I think the minister has made the case why this committee should be struck and why it should continue doing the work that was done. All I can ask from this minister is a commitment to discuss this with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and other Cabinet ministers with a view to making sure that these issues are first and foremost.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** And again I want to thank my critic for the question.

I think it is a very important one, and these issues are very important to our government. It's why we have put various Cabinet positions in place that deals with these issues across a broader spectrum, but also will be focused in the area of municipal and indigenous relations, specifically for this area. But I think it is important that we understand and that members opposite understand that these issues are priorities of ours. We are in the process of establishing various committees of Cabinet, and I'm sure that, you know, this will be brought to the attention.

So I thank the member for bringing this forward.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister, and I would like to turn to the organizational chart for Manitoba Justice, which we find at page 7 of the Manitoba Justice Supplementary Information for the Legislative Review.

And in the minister's opening comments she did have some—she did say some things about innovation and restorative justice. And, as we see, it is not within any particular division; it's sort of off on its own, under the control of the deputy attorney general.

Can the minister help us out by giving her view on where she wants the department to go, in terms of innovation and restorative justice?

\* (10:50)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, I thank the member for the question and I believe that this is a very important area, innovation and restorative justice, and I believe that that's why it has put—been put on its own for now, because it is just that important. And, I think, in any areas from a restorative justice perspective, I agree with the principles of it. I believe that we need to develop ways to try and keep those that it's not necessary to go through our court systems and be backlogged in our court systems out of that, to be handled in a different way—in the restorative justice way. So that's why I believe it has been a priority for our government.

Yes, I mean the reason that it is off on its own, as well, is that it really has a very significant impact on all other areas of the departments. And I'm sure the member knows, you know, that, you know, in each of the areas how innovation and restorative justice can help within those other divisions of the department.

**Mr. Swan:** And the treatment of innovation and restorative justice in the flow chart, is this the same as last year or is this new?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I want to thank the member for the question.

This is, in fact, new for this fiscal year, and it comes 'apart' as a result of a consolidation of resources from the former Justice Innovation branch. And it's combined with the proclamation, I guess, since the proclamation of The Restorative Justice Act. It's combined with that to highlight the importance of restorative justice and to give the department the effective means of implementing innovation and restore innovative and restorative justice mechanisms throughout all areas of the department, all divisions of the department.

**Mr. Swan:** I thank the minister for that.

So is there a director in this area? We'll get to the details later on in the Estimates, but just at a high level, is there a director or what do we call the person who leads up this initiative?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, it's run by an executive director.

**Mr. Swan:** And how many staff do they have working for them right now?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** There's four staff.

**Mr. Swan:** See, as of April 1, 2016, we had Irene Hamilton doing a lot of work not only as the

assistant deputy AG for Civil Law, but also the assistant deputy minister for Administration and Finance. Has that position now been filled?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** We're just in the process of finalizing that.

**Mr. Swan:** And, again, a higher level. We now have crime prevention, which is under community safety. I presume that those are the various initiatives that came back from Children and Youth Opportunities to the Department of Justice?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Swan:** And also from previous years, we had a number of—a grab bag of very important departments or organizations such as the Law Reform Commission, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the Public Guardian and Trustee, and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission sort of sitting out where Innovation and Restorative Justice now are. They've been brought in under Civil Law. Is this a new thing for this fiscal year and, if so, can the minister just explain why?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** These were changes that took place back in 2014 and '15, and the reason for that was just to—it was just a departmental reorganization and felt that it would be better to be directly under the assistant deputy—or, sorry, the—under the assistant deputy Attorney General for—at Civil Law.

**Mr. Swan:** Okay. Well, thank you.

I'm prepared to move on to deal with specific divisions, and we can start with corrections, keeping in mind that we'll be breaking very soon to go back into the House. I do expect there is a list probably printed off this morning listing the current capacity and the current number of inmates at each facility, broken down between adults and youth. Is the minister able to provide this to me?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I thank my critic for that. And we don't have the information with us right now, but it's my indication that we'll have it for you this afternoon when we continue our discussions in the area of corrections.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I thank the minister for that. And that is the way that I think Estimates can work quite efficiently, so I appreciate that.

Does the minister plan any increases in capacity in any of Manitoba's correctional centres in this fiscal year?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** There is no plans as of right now to increase the bed capacity. However, if something should arrive that—or should arise, sorry, that requires—*[interjection]* Yes, in this year, if something should arise, we will look at those situations as they arise and deal with them appropriately.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I appreciate that. And corrections does not have a no-vacancy sign that they can hang out, and I know sometimes that can result in double-bunking or triple-bunking. And that has been a problem for some time, we acknowledge.

Is there any current construction under way in any of Manitoba's correctional centres?

**Madam Chairperson:** Order.

The hour being 11 a.m., I am interrupting the proceedings.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon following the conclusion of routine proceedings.

### **GROWTH, ENTERPRISE AND TRADE**

\* (10:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade.

Does the honourable minister have any opening statement?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** Yes, I do.

Good morning. As the minister for the newly established Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, I am looking forward to the Estimates process and would like to welcome my colleagues here today and my opposition critic or, in this case, critics.

We certainly have been very busy in our first few weeks. We have already delivered a Throne Speech and budget, which is why we are here today. I am very proud of both and look forward to putting some words on the record in support of both of these initiatives.

Our first budget demonstrated our commitment to getting Manitoba back on a reasonable fiscal track. It cannot be overstated that the challenges we face as Manitoba's new government and as a province are significant. For far too long the previous

administration spent beyond its means, resulting in accumulated debt and ever-increasing taxes. Those decisions have eroded the trust and confidence of citizens in their government, negatively impacting the incomes of hard-working Manitobans and jeopardized our ability to provide the services Manitoba families depend on.

The current projection of a \$1.012-billion deficit is the largest in our province's history. The consequences of reckless spending and overexpenditures will create impacts well into the future. In our first budget we are setting a new course for Manitoba, a new course that will lead to lower taxes, better services and a strong economy. To ensure the protection of front-line services, now and into the future, we must correct the course and move our province back towards balance. To achieve these commitments, in concert with my Cabinet colleagues and our business and community partners, we have consolidated many of the economic development initiatives previously housed across several portfolios in the provincial government into the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade. These portfolios include elements of the former departments of Labour and Immigration, Mineral Resources, Jobs and the Economy, along with the tourism, energy development and rural and northern economic development initiatives.

\* (10:10)

Mr. Chair, I thought I might also spend a little time to also reference our future directions. Labour programs make an important contribution to Manitoba's growth and development by protecting the rights of workers, promoting 'harmonious' labour relations and ensuring public safety. These goals will continue to be our priority for this government, and I'm looking forward to working with a department staff to achieve gains through efficient and effective targeting of resources.

In this year's Speech from the Throne, our government committed to restoring democracy in the workplace by making it mandatory for a secret ballot vote to be held before a union can be certified as the bargaining agent for a group of employees. As part of carrying out this commitment, I have requested that the Labour Management Review Committee be convened to review and provide input on changes to The Labour Relations Act. This committee which is composed of representatives of major business and labour organizations has a long history acting as a key advisory body on labour legislation, and I

anticipate building a strong relationship with the committee in the months and years to come.

Manitoba continues to expand markets for exports by joining the federal government, other provinces and territories to negotiate new trade agreements. Significant advancements have been achieved recently with the conclusion of negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership on October of 2015. I was proud to bring forward a motion recently in the House calling on the federal government to ratify the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The federal government also completed negotiations on a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union in August of 2014, and on January 1st, 2015, a free-trade agreement with South Korea entered into force. Our government and my ministry is very support of increasing trade and investment in the province. Manitoba continues to engage the federal government in international trade negotiations with other trading partners including India and Japan.

We have already begun discussions to join the New West Partnership Trade Agreement with Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. We plan to work diligently to complete the negotiations necessary to include this important initiative within the first 100 days of this government. Manitoba's intraprovincial exports of goods and services to Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia were valued at over \$7 billion, accounting for over 40 per cent of Manitoba's intraprovincial exports of goods and services.

After a 2014 summer meeting, Canada's premiers agreed to undertake a comprehensive review of the Agreement on Internal Trade using the existing AIT as a starting point and looking to ensure more consistency with modern international trade agreements. Participating in negotiations for both the New West Partnership Trade Agreement as well as the renewed Agreement on Internal Trade will ensure that Manitoba is well positioned to benefit from improved opportunities for trade in goods and services and investment in labour mobility.

I recently went to Toronto to negotiate with my provincial and federal colleagues on the Agreement on Internal Trade. Manitoba's Industry Consulting Services works with individual companies to support opportunities to expand facilities and capabilities, and to pursue new markets with industry associations to support strategic initiatives such as the Composites Innovation Centre and the Vehicle

Technology Centre as well as the Canadian manufacturers and exports.

Jobs and economic growth are top priorities for Manitobans. We must work towards a more ambitious vision for economic development in Manitoba, one driven by innovation and strong partnerships between government and industry that can propel Manitoba beyond just stability to transformative growth and economic competitiveness on the world stage.

In Manitoba we are home to flourishing information and communication technologies, interactive digital media and life-science industries that together employ over 25,000 local professionals and contribute more than \$2.3 billion annually to Manitoba's gross domestic product. The department will continue to work with technology-based entrepreneurs and companies and the organizations that serve them in our community such as incubators, accelerators and innovation-based organizations that foster entrepreneurship, the commercialization of technologies and start-up ventures.

The department is also working, alongside its federal and provincial territorial counterparts, in a working group on clean technology, innovation and jobs to stimulate economic growth, create jobs and drive innovation across all sectors in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Over 11 million people travel to and within our province every year, spending \$1.6 billion. That activity sustains over 24,500 direct and indirect jobs and 5,400 businesses in communities throughout our province. And we only expect those numbers to grow. Incredible tourism assets such as the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the Journey to Churchill, events such as the NHL's 2016 Heritage Classic and the convention capacity of the expanded RBC Winnipeg Convention Centre will continue to elevate our province as a destination of choice.

We will tell the world about these tourism experiences by implementing the 96-4 tourism funding model and investing \$3.4 million in tourism marketing and development this year alone.

Under the previous administration Manitoba ranked last in tourism investment amongst all provinces. Through Travel Manitoba, our Crown agency for tourism marketing, funding increases will be targeted to attract US and overseas travellers.

My department will also respond to industry calls to support tourism product development by



increasing grant funding for rural, northern and indigenous cultural tourism development. Our department will be developing and delivering Yes! North, a special targeted program for northern Manitoba to increase tourism, sustainable development and increase natural resources.

Mineral Resources remains committed to sustainably developing Manitoba's mineral petroleum resources. We will accomplish this by promoting and undertaking mineral exploration and expand our potential in mining in Manitoba.

Mr. Chair, I certainly have more, much more to say in this regard and I look forward to the process going forward. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas):** Yes.

First off, I want to thank the minister for his opening comments and I'd like to say first off congratulations to a successful win, but congratulations also for the appointment to serve in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) Cabinet for Growth, Enterprise and Trade, I know it's going to be a very exciting time for the minister. I have a bit of history with the department, and I want to say congratulations and you got a—I want to say first off that the team of people that I know still exist there are wonderful, hard-working people, you got a fantastic team and I know that you guys will be able to work really well together. So congratulations and thank you for your opening comments.

I do want to start, though, by reminding the minister that over the past number of years Manitoba has been known to have one of the strongest economies in the country, one of the strongest and fastest growing. Now I do want to say for the record that that's not me saying that, that's not someone from the former government saying it, that came from private sector validators, everyone from RBC to the Bank of Montreal to Conference Board of Canada; independent validator after independent validator said Manitoba has had one of the strongest economies so the minister should be—is in good shape. We know that even the local media, from the Free Press to CJOB to CBC, often talked about how strong Manitoba's economy was

I do want to say, though, the reason that Manitoba has seen to have such a strong economy is because of the incredible work by our business leaders, our small, medium and large business leaders have done an incredible job in Manitoba. But there's always been a great balance with our labour leaders and Manitoba's workers, and there's a history of how our business community has worked very closely with our labour leaders and that's how you grow the *[inaudible]* economies. We want to make sure that those connections to our training institutions, that they get to continue to feel part of Manitoba and the decisions that are being made. Our non-profit organizations help remove barriers that might hinder participation in the labour market, and so they're doing incredible work. Our charitable organizations, you know, the Winnipeg Foundation, United Way, organizations like that working closely. The minister has inherited a program called Manitoba Works! where you got business community working directly with non-profits and creating jobs through it.

\* (10:20)

The fact is, whether it's the business community, labour leaders, training institutions, non-profits have come to recognize that there was always a government that has stood with them, that has stood by them, that has been able to make decisions to find the balance between their priorities to make sure that all people, wherever they live in Manitoba, whatever their socio-economic status is, whatever the things, challenges they might have to employment would always—there'd be a government that was always there for them.

When it comes to jobs in Manitoba, there's a history over the past year that we have more people working in Manitoba than ever before. We consistently had year after year after year one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation. We consistently had one of the best and led in job growth.

Now, one of the reasons and some of the reasons for that, and if you talk to—if you talk to businesses, they will tell you it's because Manitoba's been known to be one of the most affordable places to do business. That's why companies like Valeant down in Steinbach are shutting down shop out east and starting their—and expanding their business in Manitoba. That's why Shaw Communications, when they wanted to expand 500 jobs, they could have

picked anywhere; they picked Manitoba. And, you know, it's been an affordable place to do business.

One of the other reasons is we have a very fast growing demographic, a young indigenous population, a young immigrant, refugee, new Canadian population, and there's always been a government that had stood with these businesses to help train this demographic. So if you talk to these business leaders, if you talk to people throughout the country, Manitoba has been known to making sure that we stand with businesses to make sure people are properly trained. And a big part of that is because of labour and making sure that those workplace safe and health—health and safety things are in place, so when people are getting those jobs that they're going to be prepared to do well in them.

We were proud that we tripled the amount of apprentices. In fact, there's over 11,000 active apprentices, and if you talk to any business owners, entrepreneurs, they'll tell you they need more apprentices. So we're very proud of that.

When it comes to wages, we led in the country in wage growth. In fact, Manitoba workers were making \$40 per week more, and we took a lot of pride in the last 17 years that we increased minimum wage every year for the last 17 years. So, you know, like last summer, as an example, there's young people right now—we're sitting here in June. There's a young person right now looking for a summer job and they need that summer job, and the reason they need that summer job is because they want to make a little bit of extra money so they can put themselves through school, so they can give back to their family, so they can give back to their neighbourhoods and their community. And giving them that minimum wage increase makes a difference for those young people, particularly people who are struggling to make ends meet every day.

There was a headline that came out in the Winnipeg Free Press that highlighted strength in diversity, and it didn't just talk about the overall economy and all the different sectors and why Manitoba's economy is strong. It talked about the regional diversity that we have and how important northern Manitoba is to us. And that strength and diversity is always going to become by finding the balance between making sure that we're working with business, that we're working with labour groups, that we're working with training institutions, that we work closely with our non-profit organizations, that we send a strong message to young people that if

they—that there isn't any job they can't get and if they want to be an entrepreneur this is the best place to do it.

I do want to say, in closing, it's an invitation to the new minister. One of the things that I'm very proud of because I represent the area of Point Douglas, is there's a Social Enterprise Centre in Point Douglas and there's a lot of good people doing great work over there. And I know if the minister could find the time to go down and visit the Social Enterprise Centre I know (1) that he would be very impressed. But I also know that the Social Enterprise Centre and the good folks that are working hard to help some of the most vulnerable people get back into the labour force to get those jobs, I know they would be very proud to see this minister, to come down there. They—I know they would welcome him with open arms, and the Social Enterprise Centre is a good example how a group of people have come together and said that any profits that we can make, we're going to invest it back into our neighbourhood, any resources that we can come up with, we can help create a job.

And so I just want to say that, in closing, that I hope the new minister can find the time to get down and visit the Social Enterprise Centre. I know they would be very excited to have him. I do look forward to the discussion that we're going to have and the questions, and I want to, again, thank the minister and say congratulations. I'm looking forward to our discussion here today.

Thank you.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We thank the critic for the official opposition for those remarks.

Under the Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered in—for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer to consideration of line item 10.1.(a) containing in the resolution 10.1.

At this time, I invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber. We'll ask that the members introduce the staff in attendance.

**Mr. Cullen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the comments, and I appreciate the comments from the critic.

I'm really looking forward to this opportunity. I think there is tremendous opportunities in this particular portfolio, and looking forward to the discussion moving forward. And, obviously, there's a

lot of people that have come to meet us, and we're looking forward to having future meetings.

I do want to introduce to you today our new deputy minister, Jamie Wilson. And also joining us is our assistant deputy minister, Craig Halwachs, out of Corporate Services. Let me say—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief), introduce your staff, please.

**Mr. Chief:** This is Stephen Spence.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay. Thank you.

Does the committee wish to proceed with the Estimates of this department 'conorological', or have a global discussion?

**Mr. Chief:** Yes, global, but I would like to hear you again say chronological.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Chronological. A little nervous up here right now, thank you.

Okay, thank you to—is it agreed? *[Agreed]*

Okay, thanks Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade. Thank you for—thank you, and it is agreed, then, the questioning of this department will proceed with a global manner, with all resolutions to be passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Chief:** Yes, so I'd just like to start off, I know the minister—just want to start off by asking, there's the departmental staff, of course, that the minister has, and some that he introduced here today, and I know I'll probably get to meet more through—as we go through on Estimates.

I would just like to ask if the minister could give me the names of the—his political staff, and maybe just a brief breakdown of each—of what his political staff do in his office?

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the question.

Before I get into the political staff, I'd just like to further welcome Jamie. And I give you a little bit of a background on Jamie. We—you know, obviously, we're pretty excited to have him on board. He's brand new to this process as well. So, you know, as we're going through the Estimates process we will be—we—learning about our department as we go. So I do want to welcome Jamie and just give you a little breakdown and biography of Jamie's.

He's a young leader, originally from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, who moves with equal ease in both First Nations and non-indigenous communities. He's an educator, a former ranger in the U.S. military special operations, and recently he graduated from the executive program at the Stanford Graduate School of Business in California.

\* (10:30)

Possessing a warrior spirit, Jamie is a high-calibre triathlete and CrossFit competitor. On ancestral lands, he is an award-winning environmentalist and survivalist who teaches the traditional ways of land navigation and 'substance' living. He has also long advocated for the equality of women in ceremony and in leadership.

Jamie's greatest leadership strengths are as a facilitator and relationship builder, where he's—his calm and thoughtful demeanour enables him to navigate complex discussions in often highly charged situations to positive and successful outcomes.

Jamie is passionate about bridging the gap between First Nations and business communities to help create greater educational opportunities, joint ventures and partnerships.

Jamie earned his bachelor of arts at the University of Winnipeg and his master's in education administration from the University of Manitoba. He also holds a US multi-subject teaching credential from California State University and possesses a K-to-12 teaching experience in public school systems.

In 2010, the government of Canada appointed Jamie as treaty commissioner for the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. And in 2012 he was a recipient of the Queen's diamond jubilee medal for community service.

Jamie was recently appointed as our Deputy Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade. And we certainly look forward to Jamie—having Jamie here. And Jamie is married to Kristin Erickson. Together they have three children.

And we're very excited to have Jamie on board. And certainly I know, I think, Jamie and I share the same vision for Manitoba. And we were looking forward to some really positive results here in the province.

As far as staff in my department, I have Michael Juce, who is my special assistant. I also have

Delaney Hoepfner, who is the executive assistant; and also have Kathy Dobrianski, Sheila Babaian and Vivian Jack as administrative staff in the office.

In the deputy's office, administrative staff: Shannon Gerbrandt, Miriam Jezik and Sharee Flores.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Chief:** I want to thank the minister for that.

And I would say, of course, congratulations to Jamie. I know he's going to do good work for you. He's got a stellar reputation from his work as the treaty commissioner of Manitoba. And he's worked very closely with all parties federally. And I know he's worked with all parties here provincially. So congratulations to Jamie.

And I want to thank the minister.

I do want to also let the minister know that, of course, we're all going to be learning as we go. You know, you've got a brand new department over there, so, with a brand new makeup, so I think we're all in the same kind of shape here as we're going to go through and ask questions that are more general but also ask some very detailed questions. And it's good that we can kind of learn together as we go here.

I just—the next question I have for the minister of the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade is: Could he give us just a general overview of what makes up his department now? And, you know, he maybe wants to break that up as the, you know, what ADMs report or executive directors or managers, just to give us a better sense of it. I know that he's inherited, from what I understand, the Department of Labour. So that would give us a good sense of where things are at over there now.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the question.

As the member would recognize off the top, you know, we have reduced the size of government in terms of the portfolios across government from 19 down to 12. And we think this tone at the top, if you will, will send a direction to government, to staff within government, that we are focused on a new and a leaner government, at the same having the focus on delivering services with, hopefully, at the end of the day, at a lower cost to Manitoban taxpayers. So that certainly is one of the focuses.

The main—one of the main focuses of our government is to make sure that we are supplying the front-line services that Manitobans have come to expect. And we also want to make sure that we're

delivering the services that Manitobans need. And, you know, within this department, we are focused on the economic activity and economic growth. We think this is a key area where, if we can grow the economy in Manitoba, we will increase the revenue to the province which, in turn, that revenue will be available to supply those front-line services that Manitobans have come to expect.

So we believe the economic growth is a key pillar for us in Manitoba, and that's why we've taken this restructuring, if you will, and I think we've thrown a lot of different components together under the roof of this one portfolio.

I think, first of all, and if you refer to page 11, and if the member would, that goes through the diagram and lays out, in essence, the layout at this point in time, of our department. This—clearly, we are a new government. We've been—in terms of about five weeks since our swearing-in. So we're just getting our feet underneath us. We've put this framework forward as the initial look at the new department. We expect, over the course of time, there will be some transition, some changes within the scope of this department. So there may be, structurally, that the make-up of this department could look significantly different a year from now. But this is what we've put together so far.

If the—and I'll—maybe it'll take a few minutes here, but I'll try and walk the member through it. Clearly, Travel Manitoba is a Crown corporation. It's a stand-alone corporation, as identified in the chart. Under Deputy Minister Wilson, we have a lot of the areas on the economic development portfolio. You'll notice that on the left. We—what we've done is we've pulled the economic development components from various departments. Previously, those economic development components were housed in a lot of different departments. There was no accountability, no strategic initiatives there. We felt if we could pull the economic development under one roof, it would provide—we could provide better framework and better direction for all those throughout the province that are involved in economic development, and that's what we've done. And I think by moving that forward, we'd like to have a one-stop, if you will, one-stop shop for the clients that are involved in economic development. So that's why we've pulled the economic development component under one roof.

The old Labour department, as you know it, falls under my purview as well, and we certainly have a

lot of good people working in the Labour department. Assistant Deputy Minister Dave Dyson looks after the labour component there, the labour programs. The—also in there is the Office of the Fire Commissioner, and Fire Commissioner Dave Schafer is responsible for that department as well. We also have in there a Tourism Secretariat, Executive Director Michelle Wallace in that area. Energy, we have Executive Director Jim Crone in there. And we have Manitoba Trade and Investment Executive Director Don Callis. And I'll give the minister more after the next question.

**Mr. Chief:** I want to thank the minister for the answer.

Where I'd like to—I know the minister said—talked about the size of Cabinet and used words like leaner. I do want to say—and—in things like economic growth, we know that the best ideas come directly from the community. We know that, you know, the thoughts and ideas and the size of his department is going to be a challenge.

\* (10:40)

There's going to be a lot of demand for his time, and I know one of the questions that came up by my colleague was the employment standards act, of course, on the amendment on the groundbreaking legislation when it comes to—permit to any worker who's a—the victim of domestic violence. And so we know that there's going to be a lot of demand on his time and, you know, seeing the org chart and getting the breakdown from him.

I just—my question to the minister is: Is there going to be a—have they figured out a way to meet that demand on the programs or the initiatives? Are they—have they figured out are they going to be broken up into, you know, urban areas? Are they—is there a targeted northern strategy? Is there a focus on rural areas? So knowing the org chart is—have they thought about how they're going to deliver service, how they're going figure out how to get the best thoughts and ideas from people around Manitoba?

**Mr. Cullen:** I thank the member for the question.

Just to continue on, and I'll get to the answer to your question as well. Obviously, the mineral petroleum branch is a pretty important aspect to what we have in this department. Obviously, there's quite a bit of work that has to be done on—in that particular area as well. So, you know, we've got the trade and tourism components involved in this as well. We do have some policy initiatives there in terms of the

energy and transportation which we think are, obviously, pretty key, moving forward. We're certainly interested in how those issues will unfold in the near future.

We do have a department or an area talking about rural development. So we've moved some of the rural development folks from the old MAFRD department over into our branch. So, obviously, those people will have the expertise in rural Manitoba. And I think the member would be aware of our Yes! North initiative that we announced, which is currently in development, and we look forward to unrolling that initiative in detail into the future. Clearly, the Yes! North initiative will have the—looking at economic development opportunities in northern Manitoba and that will be the focus of the Yes! North initiative, and it will be focused on economic development and certainly tourism opportunities there as well.

You know, in my visit with Churchill last—earlier this week, in fact, having an opportunity to sit down with a lot of the people involved in the tourist trade there and the hoteliers in the area, we had a really positive discussion about what may happen in the future there in terms of tourism not just in Churchill, but how it can impact northern Manitoba. So I think there is tremendous opportunity there and we look forward to that.

We've also indicated, as a new government, that we are an open and transparent government. We don't pretend to have all the answers to whatever the issue may be, whether it be economic development, solutions around tourism, solutions around the mining sector. But having said that, we are open; our door is open for suggestions, and we believe through proper consultation we can move the province forward.

You know, it's my view that some of that consultation has been lacking, and I know it's quite often a sign when a government has been in government for a longer period of time sometimes that consultation falls by the wayside. And I think that's maybe what's happened in the last few years. Certainly, under the direction of our leader and now Premier (Mr. Pallister), we undertook a pretty extensive collaboration and discussion around the province over the course of the last three years. And I think that is—has helped us in terms of putting together this new government, putting together some new initiatives with this government. It's also allowed us the opportunity to get to meet a lot of

people around the province and get to meet the key stakeholders within the various departments of—that are dealing with government. And I think, as a result, we've been able to hit the road running, if you will, once we formed government here just five weeks ago.

So there is a lot of initiatives certainly under this particular department. We're in the—certainly in the growing stages in terms of developing the framework for economic development. We want to make sure that we're reaching out to all areas of the province and that no one is excluded from the discussion about economic development, and whatever aspect of economic development that is.

And, clearly, we're reaching out to the business community, we're reaching out to the labour community as well, and I think it's a really good fit when we have all the players under one umbrella. You know, we have the business community at the table, we have labour at the table and we have all the key players I think in the economic development side at the table. So I think this framework is going to be a positive for Manitoba.

**Mr. Chief:** So there's, again, there's going to be a lot of demands of course on this minister's time. You have, of course, real challenges, but incredible opportunity in the North. You have really great opportunities in, of course, rural Manitoba. There is going to be a lot of things around the health and safety of workers, including the moving forward on the regulations when it comes to the new piece of legislation that's unique to Canada.

My question for the minister is: Can he give us—tell us how he's seeking advice? And maybe I'll give a bit of a background on that. Is—does he have advisory committees set up for the North? Does he have—you know, maybe they're—he gets advice from certain boards. Can he provide us a list of the advisory committees that currently exist and—or—boards that he's seeking advice from the wide variety of partners that obviously are going to be demanding his time when it comes to a lot of important work that needs to be done?

**Mr. Cullen:** I thank the member for the question. I believe the member is right, there is certainly challenges out there, and certainly when you look at the—how broad this particular department is, it touches a lot of areas around the province. And, you know, as we get into discussions with the business community and labour and a lot of different stakeholders, we are realizing some of those

challenges that are out there, and, in fact, the scale of some of those challenges that are out there.

And, obviously, it's going to take some time to address all those challenges, but I do believe there is opportunities as the member pointed out. I think there is tremendous opportunities in Manitoba. And to his point about rural and northern Manitoba, I think that is one—that is an area of the province that I think we've missed some opportunities over the last few years, and you know, having spent quite a bit of time in rural and northern Manitoba, I appreciate that, and I'm looking forward to really engaging rural and northern Manitoba in this process as we go forward.

And I know we've started the consultation over the last few years. My view is to make sure that we're continuing to have that consultation, and that we are actually reaching out to those communities. I think that's key.

And I just want to mention then—and the member mentioned the mining sector, and clearly we're going to have some major challenges in the mining sector in Manitoba which is going to impact not just northern Manitoba, but quite frankly, the economy of the province. So we have to be at the table, making sure we're having those discussions with, certainly, northern Manitobans.

\* (10:50)

One thing that our government has committed to is having a Premier's enterprise team. And we're in the process of putting together names to supply to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and to his office from people around Manitoba that could supply advice to the Premier, and this may be more than just supplying advice. This may be a group that actually does some work, and then the Premier may have some—I would expect, some pretty positive interactions with this group, and the Premier may come back and ask this group to carry out some initiatives in terms of economic development around the province.

So that's certainly one thing that we have on the table, something that we will be achieving in the very near future, and we have, through our consultations in the last five weeks, we've got quite a few, I think, very, very worthwhile names put forward that we are going to be forwarding on to the Premier's office.

And during my discussions and consultations so far, we've come across a number of key stakeholders in the business community and in the labour

community that I think will be valuable in terms of offering me advice, and we have established some pretty good relationships so far. We've committed to have ongoing dialogue on a regular basis with those organizations, and, as we move forward, we're going to establish a structure with those key stakeholders so that they can have reaction and interaction with my department, with me as the minister and with the deputy, so we'll have those discussions on an ongoing basis.

So I think it's very important that we have those positive discussions, we establish the relationships early, which I think we have, and then we will move those discussions and those conversations, move those forward on a regular basis.

I know the member also talked about some legislation. Obviously, there was some legislation brought in just at the end of the previous government's tenure, and certainly on the labour side, I know there's some issues that have to be addressed yet. There's some loose ends that maybe have to be addressed. We have a positive relationship with the Labour Management Review Committee and we've given them—tasked them with some work to do, and we will continue to task them with some work to do as we move forward on various components of legislation and regulation.

So that's a tremendous group that's had great working relationships in the past, provided some very valuable information to the Province—to the government in the past, and we look forward to working with them in the future.

**Mr. Chief:** So a really simple question. The minister brought up the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) enterprise team. As the minister responsible for labour, I've got to say it's safe to assume that the minister has taken the time to forward names from labour to participate in the Premier's enterprise team.

Is that what he's done?

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, I appreciate the question.

Obviously, we've had some very positive relationships and discussions with labour. Actually it's—we found that we're on the same page on a couple of initiatives. Certainly, when you look at the Air Canada situation that we came across in our very early days in office—a very unfortunate situation with the Liberal government moving forward on legislation. Obviously, we're standing up for Manitobans, and it was nice to see the unanimous

support of the resolution yesterday in the Chamber here.

But we're also encouraged to have the dialogue with the Manitoba Federation of Labour in regard to that particular issue, and I'm glad to have them at the table supporting that initiative as well, and it's good to be working hand in hand with labour to move issues forward.

We've had discussions about other businesses here in Manitoba that are facing some challenges, and we've been able to work together in a collaborative way to move that agenda to the federal government, and that's been very positive. And we've had certainly some very positive communications and discussions with the Manitoba government employees union, as well, and recognizing that labour is a key component in terms of moving our economy forward. We will be forwarding names from the labour movement to the Premier's office for his consideration as well.

**Mr. Chief:** I want to thank the minister for that, and I do want to say, also for the record, that it was great yesterday that we did stand in solidarity not only in the House but with labour and demand that the federal government keep those jobs here in Manitoba, so I agree. And I also do want to say that I—it's good to know that members of labour will be able to have an opportunity to sit at the table with the Premier's enterprise team.

A couple other things when it comes to some internal Cabinet committees. We understand how important it is for young people in Manitoba, there is the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet that could play a significant role to provide advice, provide research. They've got tremendous partners. It is a Cabinet committee that does have a history of working together in a very non-partisan way. So two—basically two questions that are—that I think the minister will find fairly simple to answer is (1) has the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet been struck? Does he know if they've been struck; and (2) if it has, does he sit at the table at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet?

**Mr. Cullen:** I thank the member for the question.

Yes, I—in my previous history in opposition I remember the—that particular secretariat and the good work it did, and it was certainly an all-encompassing committee and I think very valuable in terms of bringing advice to the ministers. And I believe that particular secretariat under our government is under

the Education and Training portfolio. I think the minister there is in charge of that secretariat. I will endeavour to get the details to the member's question to him for this afternoon.

**Mr. Chief:** I want to thank the minister for committing to forward that information.

Another internal question about an internal Cabinet committee, with the minister's, of course, portfolio and how important—and the incredible potential indigenous people can play, same two questions. Has the indigenous affairs committee of Cabinet been struck and does he currently sit on that Cabinet committee?

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the question from the member.

Just so the member is aware, we do have a new department within our government, Indigenous and Municipal Relations. It's a new department, have a new framework, I think a framework that will be working with, obviously, municipal entities and also the indigenous community as well. So I think under that ministry—that's probably where the member wants to go in terms of getting some direction from that particular secretariat.

We know, certainly from our department, obviously, indigenous affairs are very important for our department because a lot of what we do touches on indigenous affairs and that community. So we have—we will be working very closely with that community as it relates to the various components of this portfolio, and we have certainly recognized that. Certainly, as we unroll Yes! North, we will see that being a key component of that as well.

**Mr. Chairperson:** —being 11 a.m., as previously agreed, we will now recess.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting this afternoon following routine proceedings.

Call in the Speaker.

\* (11:00)

## IN SESSION

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### RESOLUTIONS

##### Res. 7—Protecting Strong Public Health Care

**Madam Speaker:** As previously agreed, the House will now consider the resolution of the honourable

member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) on protecting strong public health care.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I move, seconded by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) that:

*WHEREAS since public, universal, high quality health care is a top priority for Manitoba families the Provincial Government should continue the former Government's investments to protect and improve frontline services rather than cut them; and*

*WHEREAS Quick Care Clinics have been proven to give families faster and more convenient healthcare options while taking pressures off of emergency rooms, the Provincial Government should commit to doubling the number of Clinics in Manitoba; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government should prioritize investing in health care supports in the North, including making it easier for families to access healthy foods, building more First Nations health centres and encouraging more healthcare professionals to work up North; and*

*WHEREAS the Official Opposition believes that prevention is the key to healthy communities which is why the previous Government committed to building the Concordia Health and Fitness Centre and the new Provincial Government is urged to honour this commitment; and*

*WHEREAS the Premier wants to privatize healthcare services which would create an American style, two-tier system where the wealthy can pay to jump to the front of the line; and*

*WHEREAS even after stating that two-tier healthcare is "a better way to do things," the Premier neglected to offer a comprehensive plan for strengthening home care, expanding rural health supports or recruiting more family doctors and nurse practitioners.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to reconsider its plan to privatize health-care services and fully commit to protecting front-line workers and those that support them.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Wiebe:** It's my honour to stand in this House and bring this very important private members' resolution for debate this morning, and I did want to inform the House that I don't anticipate to spend too much time on my feet, that I won't eat up too much



of the clock because, to be quite frank, what I'm looking for is to hear others' opinions and voices on this. And what we're hoping to get is a little bit more information and a little bit more clarity from the government, and of course to hear from members of our opposition on the importance of strong public health care in Manitoba. So I intend to not take too much time, but I did want to put a few words on the record.

When the previous government was formed back in 1999, it proceeded to undertake a massive rebuilding and repairing of the damage that was done to the health-care system here in Manitoba, and one of the fundamental building blocks, of course, of that system is our belief in universal health care. And it was upon that important foundation that we heard from the families in Manitoba; we heard from the people of Manitoba to rebuild that health-care system, to begin the training—at the most basic levels, to begin training, to begin funding health-care workers and to begin funding capital projects at a rate that really hadn't been seen in this province before.

And it was a massive undertaking and began to repair, as I said, the damage that was done. And it was done on the basis—the rebuilding, that is, of—again, the universality of our health-care system, the fact that it is a public health-care system, and the understanding that it's a basic element within this province and one that we believe should be beyond politics, should be beyond partisan debate and is a fundamental element of living in Manitoba and caring for one another in our province.

However we are concerned because here we stand today, people are phoning my office—again, my phone is ringing off the hook, people are asking me, where is the clarity, where is the commitment from this government to the universal—universality of health care in our province, and why are they not clarifying when their record is so clear?

They have a record of privatizing vital services like home care and, of course, MTS. They've refused to keep their—to keeping public health care public.

And so they have us worried about what they have planned, and they haven't offered a comprehensive plan for Manitoba's health-care system except to suggest that they should privatize parts of it and perhaps, as their leader had said, a move towards a two-tier, American-style health-care system where the wealthy can jump to the front of

the line and get quicker service than the rest of us. So they've been unclear in one sense.

They've also made a few commitments, however they've been very much underwhelming; they've been confusing, they haven't been transparent and they didn't address the issues that Manitobans identified in the last election. Manitobans voted for change, this there is no doubt, but not the changes that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Conservative government are bringing. He's talking about austerity measures; he's talking about cuts. And, when it comes to pressures on our provincial budget, the first line of defence will be our health-care system. That is where the first cuts will happen if they are coming.

So we simply want to give the opportunity to the government today to put on the record their steadfast commitment to strong public health care and have them clearly reject any kind of privatization, any kind of cuts, any kind of pressures on staff and front-line workers, because when I asked the minister in this House last week to define who he thinks front-line workers are, he equivocated—that's being generous, Madam Speaker, he didn't answer the question. He wouldn't put on the record who he thought a public—a front-line worker in health care is.

And we know how important every single worker is to keeping health care running smoothly in our province. You know, obviously it's the nurses, it's the doctors; however, it's everyone else that supports them: it's the equipment technicians, it's the maintenance staff, it's the scheduling co-ordinators; it's a number of people who maybe we don't see on a day-to-day basis as ordinary citizens but are there behind the scenes and they're doing this work. So, you know, this is a—just a great example of where they've failed to simply reassure Manitobans of what their plans are and how they can find these, in quotations, savings, without irreparably damaging services in our province.

They've also failed the commit on various capital projects, which for those who have been around this place for a while know are long-term projects. They require partnerships with the community and health care, they require partnerships with hospital foundations and the number of people that are fundraising and doing all the legwork on the ground. This is how government is the most effective, is when we can partner with amazing institutions on the ground, institutions like CancerCare.

You know, and the CEO said just this week that the government is well aware of the need for this

expansion. This process of working with them has gone on for years, and now it is being put in jeopardy because this minister will not commit to building a capital project that every single person in this province, I would say, sees the value in. They—everyone has somebody that has been affected by cancer, has seen the work or heard from neighbours—friends and neighbours of the great work at CancerCare. We know they're a great partner, we know they will deliver on what they say they would deliver on and we know the need. So we just need the minister now to say, yes, there's a need and we stand with them and we will build this project.

And there are many others, Madam Speaker. And, if I had time—I told the members opposite I wouldn't let up on Concordia Health & Fitness Centre; this is a shining example of preventative health. And I note that the minister is the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Goertzen). When it comes to active living, a project like this is invaluable.

\* (11:10)

But I did want to mention a few other areas that are mentioned in my private members' resolution, and that—one of those being the North, which as has been pointed out time and time again by members on this side of the House, that there was no mention whatsoever in the Throne Speech, in the budget, other than no North and the big holes that exist in there. But, when it comes to health care there were no mentions at all of great programs that have been established, that have helped to build health care in the North, to identify the unique needs of people in the North, and to look at ways of preventative medicine and preventative health care that have—pay real dividends in the long run in the health of the people of the North.

So, you know, we're looking for any kind of mention at all in the Throne Speech, in the budget with regards to support for northern communities. We're looking for mention of the Healthy Living programs, like the Northern Healthy Food Initiatives, none of these are in the Throne Speech or the budget which leads us to believe that they're not a priority, No. 1, at the very least, and No. 2, that these programs are at risk, and that's exactly what we're talking about today is the risk that this government is placing on these amazing programs.

QuickCare clinics, Madam Speaker, something that folks in my neighbourhood have identified as

a real solution, an innovative solution in health care to take some of the pressures off of emergency rooms to help streamline our system. They're not big, you know, capital expenditures. These are small expenditures to really deliver great service to people. They're innovative, they're low cost, they're community based and they're just one piece of the puzzle, but they're an important one.

So, you know, I will wrap it up, Madam Speaker, I did go a little bit longer than I had anticipated. To simply say that I am here to give an opportunity to every member of this House to stand up, to put words on the record, to say that they stand firmly behind public, universal health care in this province, that they stand behind the proper funding of that system, to not jeopardize it, to reject a private two-tier, American-style health care in our province, and to say that they stand behind the people who deliver those services to Manitobans.

And that I think, Madam Speaker, is key because we have not—we have heard not one word from this minister of his commitment to protecting those front-line workers, we haven't heard one word from this government of their commitment to protect our health-care system, and I ask every member, if you are committed to this, to stand up today, to put it on the record, to say that you will not cut in health care.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

### Questions

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I have a question to the member, and this is an excellent—

**Madam Speaker:** Pardon me. It is—it starts with a member of the—another party, as just pointed in what I read. So the first question is to be asked for a member from another party.

So it is the honourable member for Assiniboia.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** In another life I was senior Health critic for the official opposition and Parliamentary secretary for Health, and I always find the NDP position astounding. It seems that through not only rhetoric but action, universal health

care to the NDP results in no health care for anyone. By not being able to provide the service, it is universally denied, and we can see this with the wait times at Grace Hospital and Seven Oaks; Manitoba has the longest wait times in the country thanks to the previous government.

My question to the member who has raised the issue of private—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Why I thank the member for the question, and I didn't—I know the time ran out so we didn't quite hear the full question, but I feel like I have a sense of where he was going with that question.

You know, as I said in my preamble, you know, in this province what we—what the previous government inherited was a damaged health-care system, a system that was under pressure, that had, you know, seen the firing of nurses and the firing of doctors, the lack of training, the lack of—the freeze on capital programs, and, you know, the member opposite says no health care for anyone, I would disagree. I think we've come a long way in this province.

Now, I agree with him that we're not done yet, and that's why I—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Maloway:** I'd like to congratulate the member on an excellent resolution and I'd like to ask him to explain to the House the importance of the Concordia Health & Fitness Centre and who has actually committed and how much to this project.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I thank the member for the question, and I know it's important to his constituents as well as it is to many constituents of members of the opposition—or, sorry, of the government side, of the opposite side of the House.

I know this is an important project. The provincial government has put money on the table. I worked very hard on that with the previous member for Rossmere and, now, we look for a commitment to that project because the members of the board there are looking to move this forward. They're looking to partner with the federal government. We're waiting for them to step up. We're waiting for the government to be clear of their position of great capital projects like the Concordia Health & Fitness Centre and so many others. They've sowed, you know, concern simply by remaining silent, so we ask

them to stand up today and make the commitment to that project.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Madam Speaker, the previous government received 6 per cent increases in the annual transfers from Ottawa for health care, yet Manitoba did not spend all of that money on health care. Oh, oh. Where did it go?

In regard to privatization every family doctor in Manitoba and the country is a private operator. All the gamma clinics in Manitoba are private operators, but they're probably funded.

Is he suggesting that we should put all the doctors and clinics all under provincial payroll? Is that what he's suggesting? Nationalizing the entire health-care system?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, and I think this—

**Madam Speaker:** Sorry—the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

**Mr. Wiebe:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think this cuts to the heart of the issue when the member opposite says that there are pressures in the health-care system. Those pressures are for hiring more nurses and more doctors, for building new QuickCare clinics, for building projects like the Health & Fitness Centre at Concordia Hospital.

And so those—those pressures, in quotation marks, as the member calls them, are delivering services to Manitobans. And so, now, I'm wondering if the member sees that that should be cut, that number should be cut. That's exactly what we're talking about here, Madam Speaker, that that 6 per cent, apparently, is too high and that those services should not be delivered, you know, for Manitobans.

If that's what he's saying I think he should put that on the record.

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** Why didn't this previous government do more to prevent suicides?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to a member from the North, and as I said again in my preamble, a complete lack of mention by this government of health care and health crises in the North, and this is exactly why, in my private member's statement—or private member's resolution we specifically mentioned the North because the members opposite won't talk about the North; they won't talk about the importance of the North, and there needs to be specific funding for programs for

the people of the North, and I appreciate that the member has raised it. I know others have, in our caucus, have raised it around the caucus table, and will do so in the House, continue to do so in the House, but we hear nothing from the government.

So I give them the opportunity to stand up and put words on the record on that.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** I'd like to congratulate the member for—from Concordia on his resolution here today. I note that in the therefore be it resolved clause, that there is some wording around protecting front-line workers. It seems to me that it's motivated by some sort of concern.

\* (11:20)

I'd like to know what concerns him most. Is it the sort of slashing of GP salaries that we saw in the Filmon era that drove a generation of physicians down to the Midwestern United States? Is it the sort of cutting of nursing positions, or is it some other unknown concern that we should be anticipating here?

I'd like to have some more insight, please, if he would.

**Mr. Wiebe:** I thank the member for Fort Rouge, that is a very good question, and I would simply say, it's all of the above.

You know, the reality is we haven't heard clarification from this government, or a commitment to even who they see as a frontline worker, how they see as having the ability to protect those frontline workers, and I think those pressures that the member for Fort Rouge mentioned, are real pressures.

And, if we're only looking at the almighty dollar, if we're only looking at the bottom line, which this government seems committed to doing, they run the risk of damaging our health-care system for generations simply by not meeting the requirements that are needed to provide health care in the way that Manitobans have come to expect.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** I wonder if the member could explain to me why he feels after 17 years of government, record spending in health care more than any other province in the country, and getting the worst results when it comes to ER wait times, why does he think he could have done better with only a couple of more years after having failed for 17?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, you know, I think the minister may be a bit confused. We're discussing the private members' resolution that we have here, and like—I mean, I don't know if I need to table it, so he can have another read through. But what we're talking about is what their plan is going forward, protecting universal health care in this province, and the rejection of privatization, which his leader has come out on the record, time and time again, to say that maybe that is a better way to deliver health care in this province.

So, you know, I appreciate that the member talks about pressures on the bottom line, and that's his big concern, I would say that along with properly funding health care in our province, innovation, looking at new programs, new capital spending to support the health-care system, new training, there are a lot of—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Ms. Klassen:** You state that the official opposition believes that prevention is key. You had 17 years. Why did you not do more for the suicide issue plaguing my people?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, and as I said, Madame Speaker, it's—I appreciate the line of questioning, because it is something that I believe that the member has a unique perspective on. I believe members of our caucus also have a unique perspective on, and personal—very personal experience with.

You know, I think this, again, cuts right to the heart of the matter that by proposing to cut, by proposing to privatize and slash these programs, underfund them, that's no way to address a problem, a very serious issue. And I believe that proper funding is the first step, and looking at new and innovative ways to deal with that, I believe is absolutely key to addressing the problem. So thank you to the member for the question.

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** In April—on April 14, 2005, somebody from the government side—is now the member for Morris (Mr. Martin)—called the NDP's tobacco cessation program as an unwarranted attack on business. Can you please comment on that?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I—actually, Madam Speaker, I think the comment speaks for itself.

I think members on this side certainly see the value of protecting the health of our province first and foremost, again, not looking only at the bottom

like, not only looking at the almighty dollar, but instead looking at best ways to protect health, to build health in this province.

Keep it universal. Keep it public.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** The debate is now open.

**Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale):** I rise in the House first to thank the honourable member from Concordia for putting forward the resolution, and also for his recent re-election win in Concordia. I know he works very hard in his community, and during the campaign we crossed paths a few times, at least once I know. And I have a great deal of respect for the honourable member.

I—within weeks of forming government our new Progressive Conservative government has found that, quite honestly, the cupboards are empty and nothing but bills were left for us. We are bringing the Province back on track and we think that's important, a value for dollar is important, that's what Manitobans want, that's what Manitobans decided in this last provincial election, and that's the direction we're going to continue. We're a government that believes in not just talking that talk, we believe we can walk the walk.

I know members opposite have talked about diversity, but I want to talk about the diversity of talent in our caucus. We've got many new MLAs and many MLAs from various walks of life, the private sector, some from public sector and different levels of government, and we believe that we can deliver the results that Manitobans deserve and that Manitobans pay their hard-earned tax money to deliver results for them, and I believe we can do that.

The biggest threat to front-line services is government waste, when you pay more and get less. That's not an equation that I would like to live by, and I don't think anybody in this Chamber would like to either. Madam Speaker, after 17 years of the NDP governance, front-line service that Manitobans depend were jeopardized by accumulated debt and ever-increasing taxes. Now the debt within eight years doubled. I mean, if any one of us ran our personal or managed our personal finances that way, I mean that would be putting our families at tremendous risk, I don't think it'd be fair—or even just—to do that to Manitobans financial future.

Madam Speaker, we as a government have promised and are committed to reducing ambulance fees by half during our first mandate. We're going to address our province's shortage of personal care-home beds by developing a funding model to fast track the construction of those beds in partnership with non-profit organizations, faith-based groups and community leaders in all regions of Manitoba.

I have a number of friends that work in the health-care system and, of course, time after time, I hear the same stories of government waste, waste—that patient care is second to the bureaucracy, and I find that troubling. We should be focused on the patients, the very men and women who need our help and, quite often, are not getting it. But, yet, Manitobans again pay more and get less.

We're going to appoint a wait-times task force that will consult with front-line health-care providers to develop a plan to reduce waits in our health-care system. I know members opposite don't like to hear that we're consulting with stakeholders, but at the end of the day the stakeholders are the ones that have the expertise in this. I don't believe that elected members necessarily have all the answers; the stakeholders should. And it's more of a grassroots approach, and if the members opposite want to check off their bingo sheet and say stakeholders again I have no problem doing that.

Let's face it, after 17 years of government, the NDP government promised to eliminate hallway medicine, but Manitobans were left with highway medicine. Two members from the NDP during the last election referred to rural ERs closures as an occasional problem. I mean, occasional problem, that's a serious problem. I mean, in many rural communities if you don't have an ER and something happens to you, god forbid, you are in a state where you are in a serious situation that could cause fatality unnecessarily. Over 25 rural ERs were closed, suspending emergency services to rural communities.

Now the NDP claim that their investments improved and protected health care, but the worst ER and priority procedure wait times are increased, not improvements. Emergency room and priority procedure wait times became worst in Canada, the average ER wait is five hours, some as long as seven and over 10 per cent of ER visitors would leave without being seen.

Now, according to Canada's Wait Time Alliance, under the last five years Manitoba received an F for prostate cancer treatment wait times. Under the last four years, Manitoba ranked D in breast cancer treatment wait times. Under the previous government more than 2,300 doctors left Manitoba to practise in other provinces. Doctors earned \$6,500 more in Saskatchewan than in Manitoba. The high income tax-surtax promised would have charged almost double, driving away more ER doctors, cardiologists, neurologists. The NDP left thousands of Manitobans waiting to be admitted to long-term care, with hundreds just waiting in hospital beds and ERs across Manitoba.

\* (11:30)

The former administration did more to divide professionals than any government in history. Our new government has made a team to work and team building a priority, finally giving front-line services a voice they deserve.

Under the NDP, Manitobans paid more and got less. Reckless spending saw absolutely no results and backlogged the system. Under the last 17 years, the former administration—or—the former administration had 17 years to implement a stroke unit here in Manitoba. Our government is committed to actually making that happen. And, again—[interjection] Now, our new Progressive Conservative government recognizes the important of investing in health care and front-line services.

Is the member aware that the stress and jeopardy his NDP government put on the system by incurring huge debts and deficits on Manitobans—over \$1 billion in deficit that we inherited, that Manitobans inherited as a result of reckless spending over the past almost two decades? Does the member know how many ER—or rural ER closures occurred when they were in government, would at least 25 sound familiar? How many Manitobans were stuck in hospital while awaiting long-term care such as a personal-care-home bed? Is the member aware that the College of Physicians and Surgeons have publicly stated that under the NDP, Manitoba is known as one of the lowest doctor retention rates in Canada—retention rate in Manitoba, being around 31 per cent while the national average is closer than 58 per cent.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has, even in the election, talked about if you don't care about results, Madam Speaker, well, you just don't care. Our new Progressive Conservative government does care

about results, and that's why we made an election platform based on tangible results, realistic results, smart goals. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen in politics, and I fear that the previous election campaign under the previous regime had promised millions, billions of dollars in spending that was never going to come to fruition. An IOU does not solve health-care wait times. IOUs do not pay down debt. In fact, they probably increase it. IOUs do not invest in our children's future; they mortgage it.

So, Madam Speaker, I thank you for your time, and thank you to the House.

**An Honourable Member:** Filibuster.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** I regret to inform the Minister of Health that I will not be attempting to use unlimited time today. Perhaps just a few short minutes to put a few remarks on the record.

I'd like to begin by, you know, congratulating, once again, the member from Concordia for bringing this resolution forward. I'm also, you know, very proud to second this resolution here today.

And, again, the reason why I believe this is important is because this is an issue that I heard about quite a bit on the doorstep during the recent election campaign while campaigning in Fort Rouge. I can recall, you know, speaking to a physician who was near retirement in one of the condos in the constituency and, you know, he reflected on how many colleagues he lost during the 1990s when the salaries for GPs were slashed. And he pointed out that many of those, you know, general practitioners moved down to the Midwestern United States. A very similar conversation with another constituent who's not a physician but rather had some in-laws who moved to the Midwestern US during the Filmon era, and she remarked that they're never coming back. And so if there are, you know, issues around retention, they are long-standing and began during, you know, the past Progressive Conservative administration most likely.

Again, there was a similar concern amongst many nurses. I had a retired nurse tell me that she remembered what it was like in the 1990s and, again, that—[interjection] Well, I don't want—well, I'm being asked by the member from Lac du Bonnet to name her, but out of respect for Chatham House Rule, I think I'll refrain. There is, of course, you know, the potential for political interference. I wouldn't want to put her at risk of some sort of witch hunt or

something like that. So, of course I'll step back from sharing personal names.

But I would like to share anecdote, because she compared the treatment of nurses in, you know, the Filmon era, you know, to an ordeal, to a very traumatic event. And so there are concerns amongst many people, both the people who are the practitioners of the health-care, you know, services, but also by the clients who receive these services.

I can recall speaking to an elderly woman in a seniors' home who wants to be able to live independently, maintain, you know, that degree of pride and dignity that comes with living on her own. But she needs, you know, home-care services to be able to do that. And so, again, in addition to doctors and nurses, we also want to see those other services that, you know, all manner of Manitobans rely on, be they home care or otherwise.

Of course, you know, hearing the passion of my colleague from Kewatinook during the question period, I'm also reminded that there are many urgent needs for health-care services in the northern regions of our province. For instance, one issue that I've heard raised, you know, prior to my being elected, many times, was the issue of returning birthing to northern communities, like Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation or like Pimicikamak or like Norway House Cree Nation.

Again, oftentimes mothers have to fly down to, you know, Winnipeg, in order to deliver or to other, you know, urban or rural centres, but it has been a major priority identified through the research of Dr. Jaime Cidro at the University of Winnipeg that when communities have a chance to set their own health-care priorities, First Nations communities, often the top of their list is to be able to deliver babies right there at home. And so, you know, the NDP worked for many years to try and educate more midwives here in the province, and that's one of the question marks that I have now. Are we going to see midwife programs continue under the Progressive Conservative government? Will there be a strong commitment to educating midwives here in the province, and then upon graduation, as had been, you know, the custom under the NDP, will those midwives educated here in Manitoba be given jobs here in Manitoba?

And so these are the types of concerns that lead us to bring a resolution like this forward here today. It's just about calling on the government to provide greater clarity. We do hear the talking points

about consulting front-line stakeholders, but then we don't hear a definition for who those stakeholders are. We were—we saw, consult front-line education stakeholders, for instance, in the Throne Speech, and then we saw the Minister of Education tell the media that he was trying to stay away from defining who front-line education workers are. So, again, we believe that, you know, a government that espouses openness and transparency should, of course, you know, tell us, you know, who these front-line workers are, you know, what these services are that we can expect to see protected as they've promised us.

Again, you know, just very briefly, I think it's interesting when the members on the government side talk about the fear mongering or the campaign of fear, I believe, the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), you know, shouted out a few minutes ago. But all we're doing is putting the past actions of the Progressive Conservative governments on record or the past statements of, you know, the Progressive Conservative MLAs on the record, and it seems as though when we give an honest account of their positions or statements in the past, they think there's something scary about those because they accuse us of fear mongering. So, clearly, they must think that there's some—*[interjection]* The Minister of Health is commenting that he was likely in high school during the 1990s. Yes, I believe I was in a similar state of education at the time, and though I was a young person, even then I knew how bad the former premier was handling the health-care industry.

So, again, you know, all in good fun, all in good jest, but when it gets down to it, I do recognize that all of us do respect the dignity that every Manitoban deserves, that we all do want a health-care system that, you know, is functional and affords quality of life to everyone. But it seems as though there is a major ideological divide in how it is that we could get there, and so we are asking for some clarity, and we would like to see, you know, support from across this Chamber for this resolution here today, Madam Speaker.

Miigwech, thank you.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today and put a few facts on the record. I'd like to thank the member from Concordia for bringing this resolution forward, and it gives us an opportunity to, again, put a few words on the record.

\* (11:40)

I'd like to congratulate the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) for now being elected and representing his community. And I'm sure he will, with all great efforts, try to maintain that over the next few years.

What's interesting, Madam Speaker, is I read today's resolution put forward by the member of Concordia, and it says, the title of the resolution is, Protecting Strong Public Health Care. And it's interesting that he brings this resolution forward a mere five weeks or so after the last—after our last provincial election, because I believe that Manitobans took care of that for him.

What ended up happening was that we were elected in the last election. And the—and Manitobans spoke very loud and clear, gave us a strong mandate, gave the Progressive Conservatives a strong mandate to protect their public health care. And by voting out the NDP after 17 years, after 17 years of waste and mismanagement, Manitobans have given the Progressive Conservative, our party, a strong mandate to protect those—their hard-earned tax dollars and make sure that we are protecting their health-care services, but not only health-care services, education, our infrastructure. They were tired of the broken promises put forward by the NDP government over the last 17 years. And we saw many waste and mismanagement under that Selinger government era.

We see as we're going through many of the questions now that are coming out in question period, Madam Speaker, in regards to health care, in regards to making sure that our services are hitting the North. I mean, yes Manitoba; Yes! North is going to be—you know, being released. And we're working hard on the consultative basis, making sure that all Manitobans are being heard and we're able to actually bring forward a lot of those things that Manitobans are requesting.

We've seen that, you know, I think it was the '90s, members from the—on the NDP side, they like to bring up the '90s all the time, and I believe it was their former-former leader, Mr. Doer, who was the premier, who had promised to hall—end hallway medicine, I think, within a few months, within a few months. Was it three or four months did he promise that? I know that the member from Fort Rouge, he was saying that the past premier, Mr. Gary Doer, had promised to end hallway medicine in about three or four months.

And what did we find, Madam Speaker? We found that not only did they—no, no, wait, they didn't end hallway medicine. What they ended up doing is they actually took that hallway medicine and got it to the point where our hallways were bursting at the seams. So what did they end up doing?

They actually ended up creating highway medicine. We found many, many stories from our good friends and neighbours up in the North, various communities in rural Manitoba, Madam Speaker, where they were actually having to hit the highways and try to go from town, to community, to community to try to find some sort of help in health care.

And then what did they do? They ended up going from highway medicine, Madam Speaker, to actually taxicab medicine. They were just sending patients out in the middle of the night, putting them into their pyjamas and robes and maybe sometimes giving them a few cents for taxicab fare, and they would actually send these patients out into the cold winter nights to fend for themselves and hopefully they made it home safely.

But that was the old era of the Selinger government, Madam Speaker. And that is something that we on this side of the House have worked very, very hard over the last few years, making sure that we've got policies and procedures and things to move forward to make sure that we start rectifying some of the mistakes that the NDP government have done over the last 17 years.

To take a quote from my friend, my colleague from Morris, he often says when we're sitting here listening to question period and the NDP members, they basically ask our side of the House some questions. And they often ask, how come you Progressive Conservatives aren't doing what we didn't do? Constantly, they're asking questions like that, Madam Speaker. They had 17 years to do various things all across this great province of ours, and what did they do? They more than doubled our debt in eight years; they've driven a—one successful health-care system to the point where we've got ERs that are closed. I know the member from Concordia, he stands in the House once in a while and he asks questions to our Health Minister in regards to various things where he knows the answers, and he knows that it's—it was their NDP government that absolutely failed; they were failing Manitobans and that's why Manitobans spoke quite highly in the 2016 election, and gave the Progressive Conservatives the strong



mandate of 40 members here in the Progressive Conservative caucus.

I'd like to commend the member for Southdale (Mr. Smith) on his—commend the member for Southdale for bringing forward his speech to this resolution this morning. He did an absolutely fantastic job, and I know that he's going to represent his constituents of Southdale very, very well. I know that his predecessor predecessor, Mr. Jack Reimer, represented their area very, very well, and we saw what had happened with their—the NDP's mandate or view to what teamwork is all about, Madam Speaker.

But you know what, that will be a discussion for another day when we talk about the various negativity of teamwork displayed by the NDP government, and I believe that was actually brought forward quite evidently in the election, whereas now we've got, you know, the member from Minto, he's the rebel of one, now, in the NDP caucus. And I know he's trying hard to recruit others within that NDP caucus.

What have we've seen over the last 17 years under NDP government rule? I know that the member from Tyndall Park, he's just on the edge of his seat; I know he wants to probably get up and put a few words on the record in regards to the resolution by his side of the House. But, in the last 17 years, what have we seen? We've seen 25 rural ERs closed or suspending emergency services, being put under nurse-managed care. I know that we've got many communities in rural Manitoba that, unfortunately, under the NDP government had to limit services which then put people's health care absolutely at risk, Madam Speaker. Because, then, what were they doing? They were having to make tough decisions whether they should, you know, try to make it to the next town or should they maybe, you know, call the ambulance or should they be, maybe, making their way to—into the city, to then—what was waiting for them in the city?

We know that, under the NDP government, they had record-breaking wait times. Matter of fact, they led the country in wait times, Madam Speaker, which basically ranged from five hours as long as seven hours. I know that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has mentioned a few times that you can actually jump on an airplane and make it to Vancouver and back faster than what you would do waiting for ER service in this great province of ours.

But have no fear, Madam Speaker. We've been given that mandate to do the job merely five weeks

ago. We're going to make sure that the priorities that we're setting up and moving forward on are actually going to be done. We're going to be accountable and transparent, something that—those couple words were not even in the NDP government's playbook or in their vocabulary. We know that we're looking forward to this challenge; we know that we've got a diverse caucus. We've got some great ministers ready to do the job, and we are going to get that job done for Manitobans, so I'm willing to give other people a chance to speak.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

\* (11:50)

### House Business

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, on House business, in accordance of rule 35(8), I would like to announce that the private members' resolution to be considered on next Thursday of private members' business will be recognition that the minimum wage should be increased, brought forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

**Madam Speaker:** For information of the House, it has been announced that the private members' resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be recognition that the minimum wage should be increased, brought forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon.

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**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** On this resolution, which has been put forward by the NDP, first of all, I want to state our Liberal position. We are against privatization of health-care services. In fact, we support the inclusion of additional health care services under medicare. Specifically, the inclusion of psychological services delivered by psychologists because, as we've seen over the last number of years, there is too little support for mental health care in Manitoba, and this clearly needs to be addressed.

Now, this resolution talks about the provincial government plan to privatize health care services. From our Liberal perspective, we actually see a problem with this resolution, because we haven't seen any plan from the Progressive Conservatives yet, whether it's to privatize or not to privatize, except, of course, to do reviews. The ND—the Conservatives are front and centre, we're going to review this; we'll review that; we'll review those;

we'll review these. But there's no plan to do anything yet. So we await the delivery of a plan and we hope that the government will actually table a plan with what they're going to do with health-care services as soon as possible so that, in fact, we can provide a good and effective comment on that plan when it does appear.

I would like to make another comment, and that is that we have heard the suggestion that the NDP had to repair a lot of damage from the Tory years. Well, I would suggest to those in the NDP party that there is a lot of work right now to repair the damage done for the last 17 years under the NDP to the health of Manitobans. We've gone from 5,000–50,000 people with diabetes to more than 100,000. This NDP party was missing in action. There was never a plan.

Their—they have closed rural emergency rooms; they have got huge, long waits in our emergency rooms; in spite of numerous reports there's too high a rate of suicides, there's inadequate attention to mental illness; there is a lack of putting in place a dedicated stroke unit. This is actually rather extraordinary because dedicated stroke units started in the late 1980s, and every other province in Canada has had them; they are proven to be very effective in reducing morbidity and mortality related to health care quite significantly. And, because disability related to stroke is one of the most expensive costs in the whole health-care system, is one of the reasons why the health-care costs have been growing.

You know, it's extraordinary that this wasn't put in place both to improve the care and the quality of life for many seniors, but also to address the rapidly escalating health-care costs, because when you can do good things like improving the quality of people's health, decreasing their disability and saving dollars at the same time, it seems to be, that's—would be a good thing to do. But, in 17 years, sadly, the NDP never had the ability, the drive or whatever it would have taken to get the dedicated stroke-care unit done.

There wasn't enough attention to preventing and helping those with FASD, still all too common in our province. And I could go on, Madam Speaker, with a long, long list, but I won't go any further. I just want to say that, you know, we, from our point of view, want to make sure that health-care is not privatized. In fact, we would extend it to psychological services to make sure people are better served in terms of mental illness, but we also feel that the Conservatives need a real plan and that the NDP

need to remember that they didn't leave the health-care system in as great a shape as they would like to think.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Good morning, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be here for private members' business to speak about this resolution. I worry for my friend from Concordia who used to be—I knew him as an optimistic person. When I used to listen in the House, he would talk about the optimism of Manitoba and the great things that are happening in Manitoba. And something has happened to him in the last, oh, I don't know, maybe 45 or 50 days, and, suddenly, he just sees the negative and he just sees the gloom. Every cloud that rolls by, he can't see the sunshine anymore.

And I worry about him because I like him, and I like him as an individual and I hope that whatever he's suffering from at this point is temporary and that when we continue on in this four-year term that he'll again come to the optimism that the rest of us have, that most of us, or all of us, on this side of the House and a few on that side of the House seem to have about Manitoba. We see the great things that are happening in Manitoba.

In the area of health care, just in the last couple of days, Madam Speaker, I've had some wonderful opportunities to meet with those in the health-care system who are doing great things and who share the optimism that we have as the government. I met with the Institute for Patient Safety yesterday and heard some of the things that they are doing. I look forward to future meetings with them in terms of how they are ensuring that the patient experience in Manitoba doesn't just result in a good medical outcome but that it is done in a safe way.

Yesterday I met with the association—Manitoba association of pharmacists, and it was interesting to learn from them the on-the-ground work that they are doing within their communities, some within the corporate context of pharmacies, some within individual ownership of pharmacies in small and large centres alike and the different pieces of work that they are doing. Now, they, of course, have an extended scope of practice. Many of the things that they are doing as pharmacists, you have to pay for; there's a fee for a service. And that was, you know, one of the concerns that they raised during the election. I imagine that the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) would have been offered, as I think all candidates were, an opportunity to visit pharmacies

and to see the different work that pharmacists are doing, Madam Speaker. And they would have raised the concern that they have to do many things fee for service.

They charge their customers and their patients as a pharmacist for doing a number of different things, which, you know, I think a lot in the public would look at as being a private type of service, Madam Speaker. The very thing that the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) stands up here today and rails against is the very thing that was prevalent and that was brought forward through his government. So I think he doesn't quite have his facts straight on this.

Now, we're all learning, of course, in our new roles. I don't pretend to have all of the answers either, and I imagine my friend from Concordia doesn't have all of the answers or the questions to ask. We're learning in our new roles, so I'll give him a little bit of grace on that, that he may not have understood that that was happening even within the area of pharmacy right now.

This morning, I had the opportunity to help open the 2016 national conference of dietitians who are gathering here in Winnipeg. And I could use some of their advice, of course, Madam Speaker, and maybe I'll get a chance to speak to them on a more personal level. But to hear the work that they're doing in Manitoba and across Canada was very exciting for me this morning.

And they are optimistic about their role within the health-care system. They have many ideas in terms of how they can help reduce costs over time by bringing forward education on diets. And, of course, that relates to type 2 diabetes and many other things that we are dealing with in chronic disease. But they were optimistic. And they were enthusiastic about the things that are happening not just in Manitoba but in Canada. And I would encourage all members, particularly those opposite who aren't members of the government, to share some of that optimism, to not be so down on Manitoba.

I enjoyed my time yesterday at the Blue Bomber game, where they had a resounding game. I had a—sat near the member—I high-fived the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) a couple of times after touchdowns, Madam Speaker. That's the kind of optimism we can all share. We should be high-fiving here in the Legislature about all the great things that are happening in Manitoba, not having day after day of doom and gloom from the members opposite who don't see the bright, sunny blue skies in our province.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

When this matter is before the House, the honourable minister will have five minutes remaining.

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, June 9, 2016**

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