

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I rise today to table Manitoba Finance Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2018-2019 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Student Aid Annual Report for 2016-2017.

And I'm also pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Education and Training.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I rise today to table the Manitoba Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2018-2019 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

I also rise to table the Manitoba Employee Pensions and Other Costs Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2018-2019 Departmental Expenditure Estimates; and the Manitoba Civil Service Commission Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2018-2019 Departmental Estimates of Expenditure.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Andrews Heritage Committee

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the St. Andrews heritage committee.

A group of volunteers first formed this committee to write a book, *Beyond the Gates of Lower Fort Garry*, in celebration of the RM of St. Andrews' centennial.

In 2005, in honour of the 125th anniversary of the RM of St. Andrews, this group of volunteers obtained a former fire hall in the community and established a museum.

In 2013, the executive of the volunteer committee—with the assistance of the mayor of St. Andrews, the heritage committee was successful in acquiring the St. Andrews Rectory National Historic Site from Parks Canada.

The rectory, built in 1854, was home of the minister of St. Andrews-on-the-Red.

Today, St. Andrews heritage committee works tirelessly to preserve the unique history of the community by creating exhibits and displays. Madam Speaker, this is—small group of volunteers has contributed countless efforts towards the building, to manage the gift shop, upkeep the garden and to offer visitors a unique program.

Madam Speaker, Russ Garvie, chair of the St. Andrews heritage committee, is in the gallery joining us today. I would like to ask my fellow members to join me in congratulating Mr. Garvie and the entire committee on the important work they do preserving Manitoba's unique history.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Brandon's Agricultural Exhibitions

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Well, thank you, and good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

In 1882, the Brandon Agricultural Society was formed with the local help of businessmen throwing in \$200 and calling for entries of cattle, horses, pigs, poultry and grains. The Brandon fair was the start of a long history of agricultural exhibitions in the city of Brandon.

With promoting the sale of livestock and encouraging the improvement in the breeding lines and care of animals in mind, the Brandon Agricultural Society expanded in March of 1908 with the introduction of the Brandon Winter Fair.

Throughout the many years and the early years, numerous educational opportunities were added to the fair, as well as displays by government agencies, implement dealers and manufacturers. In addition, there was an opportunity to attend lectures and

meetings of breed associations and other agricultural groups.

On July 12th, 1970, Madam Speaker, the Brandon Winter Fair was granted patronage by a visit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and became the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair.

Two weeks ago, Madam Speaker, members of this Legislature and their families had the opportunity to visit the Manitoba winter fair for one of six days. From the petting zoo, to the SuperDogs, to the horse jumping and the Grand Prix, it truly was a fun-filled day for everyone.

I believe everyone enjoyed themselves thoroughly, Madam Speaker, and on behalf of all MLAs, I would like to take this opportunity to thank President Brent Mills and GM Ron Kristjansson for the invitation.

I would ask all Manitobans to keep in mind March 25th to 30th, 2019, and we'll see you all back at the fair.

Dufferin Seniors Centre

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Dufferin Seniors Centre is a non-profit, providing social activities and programs for over 120-plus seniors, keeping their minds and bodies active.

The centre offers a full support, which includes perogy making, all-you-can-eat soup and perogy lunches, shuffle board, bingos, teas, dances and moccasin making.

Their activities also reach out to the broader community by partnering with other seniors—other senior groups. Last year the centre hosted a free Canada 150 barbecue, with proceeds from the silent auction going to the Bear Clan.

The Dufferin Seniors Centre, along with non-profit groups, have benefited from affordable lease deals with the City of Winnipeg in the past. But this lease is coming to an end this spring, and the centre's now facing a \$1,200-a-month increase in rent. Administrators have told me that they will not be able to pay this and will be forced to close.

Currently, the centre relies on perogy sales, community lunches to cover their operating costs and this simply is not enough.

In March, I wrote a letter to the City of Winnipeg, urging them to maintain the existing agreement with the centre while they find new

funding avenues. I have not received a response yet, but our seniors have now met with the city officials.

It is up to our provincial government to step in and provide immediate relief so that these seniors of Dufferin centre can continue to provide services for seniors in my area.

I see the value of centres like Dufferin every day as an MLA. For many seniors, loneliness and isolation is a daily occurrence, and the Dufferin Seniors Centre mitigates this with their robust and needed activities.

Without continued support, the centre will be forced to close and their services, leaving low-income seniors without support. I urge the provincial government to step in and stand up for this centre.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker, and I ask my colleagues to enjoy—to join me in honouring the seniors who are in the gallery today.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas.

Mrs. Smith: I ask for leave to have the names included in Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include the names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Island Lake Meth Crisis

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, a month ago, Liberal Leader Dougald Lamont, Liberal President Paul Brault and I travelled the winter roads, the ice roads, to meet the MLA for Kewatinook in her home community of St. Theresa Point.

There, we saw a whole wall covered with striking handwritten posters: meth kills; please do not bring meth in community; meth robbed me of my sanity; addiction is a family disease; one person may use but the whole family suffers; please get help; stop smoking meth; it's not too late to turn your life around.

It was astonishing to see this wall. I thought, this can't be happening here. But it was and is.

It happened because last summer, when people from the Island Lake community were evacuated to Winnipeg because of forest fires, drug dealers gave them free samples of meth. The MLA for Kewatinook pointed this out, but little was done.

Now we face a full-blown meth crisis in the Island Lake region.

Maureen Wood and other concerned citizens have spent days walking all the way to Winnipeg. Together, we must support Maureen Wood and the other walkers who have made this quest. The provincial government needs to act immediately to ensure the resources and the people are there to address this crisis.

It is also an opportunity, an important lesson on how we fight forest fires. There was an opportunity early on to put out the fire last summer before it threatened these communities. The opportunity wasn't taken. We need to be sure that if such opportunities occur, they are not missed in the future. If the evacuation had been prevented, the meth crisis would have been prevented as well.

* (13:40)

Thank you. Miigwech.

Frank and Betty Thomas

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Madam Speaker, Evan Thomas played right wing for the Humboldt Broncos. This was his first season with the Broncos. Evan died with many of his teammates, coaches and team staff in the crash Friday night. He is remembered as a good student, a caring young man and being devoted to hockey, always out playing street hockey with his friends. Like his father and uncles, he was a multisport athlete, representing his province in baseball in national tournaments. He was 18.

Evan came from a hockey family. His father, Scott Thomas of Naicam, Saskatchewan, once played for the Moose Jaw Warriors. He's now the president of the Saskatoon Blazers.

Madam Speaker, Evan was the grandson of Frank and Betty Thomas of Brandon. He was very close to Frank and Betty. They were, indeed, a hockey family. Frank and Betty were very proud of their four sons as they all played hockey at an elite level. I would often cross paths with Frank in a small town in southwest Manitoba when he was a regional manager with CIBC. I could tell how proud Frank was of his family and would often hear stories of their hockey or baseball. With four busy sons, Betty handled the logistics and held it all together to make sure everybody was in the right place at the right time with the right equipment.

Frank and Betty retired in Brandon and moved from following their sons to following their grandchildren. Frank worked with us at Shur-Gro, helping us with customer credit. They were both a great help to me through two elections, and I was always struck by their optimism and positive outlook.

Madam Speaker, Frank and Betty were on the way to the Broncos' playoff game when they received the news of the crash. I reached out to Frank Saturday morning, offering condolences and any help they would need. Frank sent his thanks and then sent another email asking me to let his friends in our business know that he'd be away for a few days. That's Frank, always thinking of others.

Frank and Betty, our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family and the entire Broncos family. Take care.

Introduction of Guests

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

We have, seated in the public gallery, from Carberry Collegiate, 37 grade 9 students under the direction of Reagan Dyck, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Concordia and Seven Oaks Hospitals Request to Stop ER Closures

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, Madam Speaker, nobody in the last election voted to have fewer emergency rooms both in Winnipeg and across the province, yet that's exactly what they're getting with the Premier's plan to cut our health-care system: fewer emergency rooms, fewer clinics and fewer health-care services, overworked nurses and doctors pushed to the limit. There's been cuts to CancerCare, cuts to personal-care-home plans, and this is all part of the so-called plan that the Premier is delivering. Instead of delivering services that families rely on, they're focused on the cuts and they're focused only on the financial bottom line.

Now, with tens of thousands of people, both in the city and across Manitoba, left uncertain about the

timeline for the closures that have been announced here in Seven Oaks and Concordia ERs, we're suggesting that the Premier ought to listen. He ought to cancel his plan to close these emergency rooms.

Is the Premier prepared to reverse course and instead keep Concordia and Seven Oaks emergency departments open?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the member again confuses rhetoric with facts, Madam Speaker, and the myth of cuts is just that: it's a myth. The reality is that this year alone we will invest more than \$650 million more than the NDP ever did in health care, and so the facts are strangely at odds with the member's assertions.

In respect of the health-care system, though, Madam Speaker, we know that it is sick; it is broken; it is a broken system that has been broken for a long time, and the lack of leadership of the previous administration to fixing it and addressing the problems that are within it was apparent to all Manitobans, who had to wait record lengths for services, tests and in emergency rooms.

So, we inherited a system that was broken. We've undertaken courageously to fix it and we will do our very best to repair a system that Manitobans value very much and depend upon for their health, their well-being and their confidence for their family.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, what families in our province want is for the health-care services that they need to be there for them when they need it and they want those services to be available close to home.

Now, instead, not only have they seen a Premier come forward with a plan to close multiple emergency rooms here in the city, but they're also cutting the upstream services that would reduce demand on those emergency departments in the long run.

So, the orthotics program, there's been a cut. We know that the special drugs program has also been cut. We know that the physiotherapy outpatient services have been cut. All these cuts damage people in the short term, but they also damage the system in the long term as people are more prone to injury, experience a deteriorated quality of life and are more likely to have to visit the emergency department. The plan does not make sense. It does not protect Manitobans.

Will the Premier change his plans and instead keep Concordia and Seven Oaks emergency rooms open?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the irony of the member's question is that it betrays the fact that he didn't even read the research done by the previous government. It was commissioned by the previous government to give advice to the previous government on how to fix the health-care system. He hasn't even read it, because if he read it he'd know that the recommendations include recommendations to concentrate emergency services in fewer locations so that everything can be there, so that when an ambulance gets a patient to that facility they don't have to be moved again a second time or a third, so they can get the care they need. So the specialists can be there, so the diagnostic equipment can be there.

What he ignores is the fact that every other major city in Canada has reduced the number of emergency rooms and concentrated their resources so they can get care to people faster, and Manitoba hasn't done that until now.

Now, Madam Speaker, the result of the NDP strategy was that people were waiting six and seven hours in emergency rooms before they could even get to care.

So, the member betrays an ignorance of the real research that the previous government did, which was not acted upon. They didn't have the courage to fix the system, Madam Speaker, but we do.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Premier lacks the courage to be able to admit when he's wrong, and he's clearly off-side with this plan—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to close emergency rooms here in the city of Winnipeg. Not only are the residents in the communities affected by the closures of Concordia and Seven Oaks speaking out, but so are the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —health-care professionals who deliver care to the most vulnerable among us, including our own relatives.

We also know that there's many people in rural Manitoba who are upset about the plans to close emergency departments and EMS stations.

We know that many people and communities like Oak Lake and some of the surrounding areas have been trying to get meetings with both the Minister of Health, the Premier, anybody in this government, to try and voice their concern, but they're unsuccessful in being able to set up a meeting time.

In the absence of a willingness to meet, will the Premier instead abandon his plan to close emergency rooms like Concordia and Seven Oaks until he's prepared to get back to basics and listen to the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: People in Manitoba, under the NDP, were voting with their feet, Madam Speaker. They were forced to use highway medicine. Many, a record number, apparently, were going to the United States and looking for care down there because they couldn't get it here. Others got tired of waiting in emergency rooms, just gave up and went home.

People got sick and tired of paying 500-plus dollars for ambulance fees, Madam Speaker, and some of them even took it into their own feet and had to walk to emergency rooms.

That's the system the member opposite is defending. It's indefensible, Madam Speaker. He can keep defending it all he wants. While he's defending the old way of doing things badly, we'll make sure the new system works better for the people of Manitoba.

* (13:50)

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

Churchill, Manitoba Rail Line Repair

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's been almost a year since a massive flood isolated the people of Churchill by washing out the rail line.

Now, we've seen that the Premier is very willing to pick a fight with the federal government on a number of issues, including this one, but we've seen less of a willingness for him to go to bat for the people of Churchill and actually force OmniTRAX to repair the rail line.

He had the opportunity to join us with the brief filed with the Canadian transportation authority, but he has so far declined to do so. We know that instead he's decided to spend money on a legal challenge

in Nova Scotia against teachers in that province, instead, of course, going to court on behalf of the people who live here in Manitoba.

Why has the Premier abandoned the people of Churchill and all those affected by the washout on the Bay Line?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well certainly, Madam Speaker, we've stood up for the people of this province and the people of the North and of Churchill at every opportunity and we will continue to do so.

What we have noticed is a willingness on the part of the NDP leader and his caucus to do everything they can to support Ottawa on every issue, and Madam Speaker, we agree with Ottawa on many issues and have struck great agreements, advancing causes like housing, improving situations for those most in need and improving our strategies on agriculture and infrastructure.

But we will disagree with Ottawa, unlike the members opposite, when they cut health-care transfers. We will disagree and we will stand up for the people of Manitoba for a real partnership and real support.

You know, Paul Martin said he would contribute 25 per cent of our budget on health care and he kept his word, but now that word's been broken and the federal government's down to 19 and sinking, and the NDP is silent about it and they won't say a word.

Now, health care's the No. 1 priority for the people of Manitoba. We'll stand up and we'll fight for health care for Manitobans. The NDP can be quiet about it, because they didn't do anything about it for 17 years.

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

Polar Bear Alert Program Funding Reduction

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): A supplementary question, again, about Churchill, Madam Speaker.

I'm sure the people of Churchill want answers and they are very concerned about their futures. I know, I had a chance to visit the community—which is a real gem, I might add—had a chance to visit earlier this year.

Now, we know that the polar bear is an iconic symbol of this northern community, yet at the same

time we ought to remember that polar bears are also dangerous animals—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and that the danger that they pose is real.

Now, the department has a program called the Polar Bear Alert Program and it says that the presence of polar bears, and I quote here, creates a potentially dangerous, sometimes fatal situation for both bears and people, end quote.

Now, we've learned through freedom of information requests—that I would table—that the program has been cut by some \$300,000, by nearly 40 per cent. This cut adds insult to the injury suffered by the people of Churchill.

Why has the Premier cut the Polar Bear Alert Program?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, in every respect, Madam Speaker, whether it be access to reasonably priced food, public safety, fuel, transport, a commitment of half a billion dollars over the coming 10 years to the people of Churchill, we've stood ahead of anything that any other government of Manitoba's ever done to stand up for the people of Churchill in this province.

In respect of the polar bear, the member specifically singles out, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —we have changed the old practice of the NDP, where they spent the most of any province on self-promotion of the government through advertising and the least on promoting the province.

We're flipping those around, Madam Speaker. So we've initiated promotion of Manitoba and Manitoba tourism, as a—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —priority, with Churchill as the centerpiece of that, Madam Speaker. The people of Churchill have thanked us and they have congratulated us on that. I invite the member to produce a single letter of congratulations on his work for Churchill since he came to power as leader. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Kinew: It's a life-or-death issue, Madam Speaker. This is about keeping people safe from polar bear attacks in the community of Churchill. Now, the Premier can talk about northern tourism, but I don't think that the tourism is going to benefit from having a less safe community, perhaps, as a result of the cut of this program.

Now we know a few facts. You know, the polar bear season is getting longer as a result of climate change. We know that there are more bears coming closer and closer to homes and schools in the community. We know that these trends will continue as climate change continues in the province.

But what has the Premier decided that the solution is going to be? Well, he's decided to cut the program by some \$300,000. Some of the impacts could be that there's less COs working to notify residents when there are dangerous animals in the community, or it could make them less likely to be able to relocate problem bears outside of the community. So it's a simple plan.

Will the Premier reverse his cut and instead maintain support for the Polar Bear Alert Program?

Mr. Pallister: Let's talk about what's dangerous for the people of Churchill and the people in the North for a second, Madam Speaker. Leader of the Opposition signed on to a thing called the Leap Manifesto, it's an NDP socialist document. What it says is there should be no trade deal signed. He signed it; doesn't want trade deals. How's that going to help the people of Churchill?

It says no resource extraction. Leave it in the ground. How's that going to help the people of the North? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Pallister: And he proposes a carbon-tax. Double, he says, is fine with him, with nothing back. Double for nothing. How do higher income taxes, higher small-business taxes, higher personal sales taxes help the people of the North?

They don't, Madam Speaker. The answer is this member is dangerous for the people of the North and especially the people of Churchill. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

**Manitoba Teachers' Society
Collective Bargaining Negotiations**

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, teachers' contracts are set to expire on June 30th. The minister has passed but not proclaimed Bill 28, and in February, the minister said that he would end collective bargaining at the school division level. Freedom of information requests, that I will table now, reveal that the minister is intent on imposing a new negotiating table, and will do so through legislation.

Why is the minister using the threat of this legislation to influence negotiations that are about to begin?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question. We've certainly been working constructively with both MTS and the school districts, School Boards Association, to have meetings on a single-desk or dual-desk, the two options of negotiations. This is consistent, of course, with policy that MTS has had in place for 12 years. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wiebe: The reality is that interference in collective bargaining has become a hallmark of this Pallister government. First, they sent staff to interfere in the labour negotiations at the University of Manitoba. Then they passed their unconstitutional Bill 28. Now, the minister is threatening yet more legislation to intervene in the collective bargaining process.

So I'm just asking, why is the minister and this government using the threat of legislation in the negotiating process?

Mr. Wishart: I think the member should be aware that we are the last province to initiate single-desk negotiations on behalf of the school districts within the province. So very—and what we've been doing is basically negotiating 38 times for the same deal.

This is much more efficient and I think everyone is happy to have that option brought forward.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

* (14:00)

Mr. Wiebe: Teachers will soon be negotiating their contracts that are expiring on June 30th. The Pallister government has used legislation to undermine the collective bargaining. Now the minister is planning more legislation to impose new negotiating—a new negotiating table on teachers.

I ask the minister: Does he intend to introduce this legislation while negotiations are under way?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question.

We're very pleased to work with both MTS and with the school superintendents on behalf of the School Boards Association to make sure that everyone has the chance to be heard and that we can find a mutually agreeable path forward that works for everyone. This is consistent with policy with both of these associations and is certainly something most Manitobans have absolutely supported. I've yet to hear anyone say we should be doing the same thing 38 times.

**Specialty Training for Police Officers
Crisis Situations Involving Mental Health**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): CBC reported that more than 460 Canadians have died in encounters with the police since 2000; 70 per cent of these individuals were Canadians living with mental health issues or addictions.

The minister is undergoing a system-wide justice review attempting to reduce the number of Manitobans involved in the criminal justice system. This review has been under way for more than a year, yet we have not produced—she has not produced any kind of report.

Has the minister included this issue in her review, and when will she present that review to the public?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): In fact, I did release that report, I did already, Madam Speaker, when we introduced our criminal justice system modernization strategy. That's exactly what that was, so the member opposite should pay attention to what, in fact, we have released.

But, Madam Speaker, the member mentions—with respect to crime rates in our province, we inherited a significant mess from members opposite. Where they failed, we will deliver with our new criminal justice system modernization strategy.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Police chiefs across the country are saying that they need more resources and more support to expand training for police officers. Some jurisdictions have taken action. The Hamilton Police Service created a special unit with specially trained officers and mental health professionals to intervene in crisis situations involving mental health.

We see a real need from this minister to properly equip police officers with the right tools and the right training to de-escalate these situations. I never saw any of this in their media release that they reported and they sent out.

So will the minister invest in Manitoba's police and protect Manitobans with mental health issues?

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for the question.

And we recognize the challenges that we face as a result of 17 years of NDP mismanagement, including in the areas of mental health and addiction problems, Madam Speaker. That's why we introduced the criminal justice system modernization strategy.

I suggest that the member opposite have a look at that strategy, because where they failed, we will deliver for Manitobans—Manitoba—to ensure safer communities and better access to justice for all Manitobans.

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

Ms. Fontaine: I did read the minister's one-page media release, and there's not much detail in that.

According to CBC data, 45 per cent—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —of these cases were persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The Minister of Health has been sitting on a VIRGO report about mental health and addictions for a while now, Madam Speaker. We know a real strategy to combat the growing 'opioid' and meth crisis must include the criminal justice system.

So the question is, Madam Speaker: Was the Minister of Justice involved in the VIRGO report and has her department received any recommendations from that review?

Mrs. Stefanson: The member is just factually incorrect, Madam Speaker.

We introduced our criminal justice system modernization strategy; that is a four-point plan. It talks about crime prevention, it talks about targeted resources for serious criminal cases, it talks about more effective restorative justice and it talks about responsible reintegration of offenders back into society. This includes mental health and addictions challenges that—I will remind members opposite what we inherited as a result of 17 years of mismanagement of the criminal justice system.

We will continue to focus on providing safer communities and more timely access to justice through our new criminal justice system modernization strategy. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Growth, Enterprise and Trade Department Vacancy Rate

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Last week, it was revealed that the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade has cut over 50 positions from his department, yet he still has a very high vacancy rate.

Can the minister explain why one out of every four staff positions in his department have been deleted or are currently vacant?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I know the member's been having some difficulty understanding the difference between vacancy and staff reductions. But we will continue to try in Estimates today.

Ubisoft: \$35-million investment, 100 new jobs; Roquette: \$400-million investment, 155 new high-tech jobs. The list goes on and on, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Right now, there are 40 vacancies in the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade. The minister said that he needs these jobs filled, and he blamed the high vacancy rate not on any of his own actions, but on the lack of loyalty of the workforce.

Madam Speaker, there are no active external job postings—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: –for this department on the government website—exactly zero.

Why is this government attacking the loyalty of its own staff when its own actions that are dismantling that department?

Mr. Pedersen: The demand for skilled workers all across Manitoba continues. Simplot: \$460-million investment, 90 new jobs; HyLife Foods, the one that the previous government tried to run out of the province—HyLife Foods, their expansion in Neepawa: 106–76 million dollars, 90 new jobs.

There's demand all across the province for skilled workers like there was never before as what—as there is now as compared to the previous government.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, this department has posted less than 10 external positions this calendar year, and there are currently no postings at all. This despite the fact that there are 40 vacancies in the minister's department. These are jobs that the minister says he needs and wants filled.

Rather than tell us the obvious, that the minister's actively demolishing his own department, he blamed the high vacancies on the loyalty of his workforce.

Why has the minister attacked the reputation of Manitobans who just want to serve this province, and why is he trying to hide the fact that he is dismantling his own workforce?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, I know the member has trouble fathoming a booming economy, but there's new jobs all across this province. The member, in Estimates, railed against the New West Partnership Agreement. He railed against the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. He got this European free trade agreement mixed up with the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. I understand why he's confused. But we're not confused on this side. We're building Manitoba, and it will be better than ever.

Department Estimates Minister's Comments

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, last week in Estimates there was an exchange between the Minister of Growth,

Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Pedersen) and the member from Flin Flon.

The minister said, and I quote: There is no loyalty in the workplace anymore.

* (14:10)

Madam Speaker, I'm extremely disappointed in this minister. His comments are insulting and undeserving. I understand that this government has no appreciation for hard-working civil servants but—this is evident through recent layoffs and wages being frozen.

Madam Speaker, all employees deserve to be valued, and I would like to give the minister an opportunity to better explain what he meant when he said there's no loyalty in the workforce anymore.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question and for the opportunity—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –to talk about our very significant investments in a transformation of the workforce.

We could not be more excited about the workforce that we employ. And just weeks ago, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), myself and the clerk of the Legislature—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: –stood to talk about a new undertaking of opportunity, transforming both the work we do and the environment in which we do it.

Now, we know that under the NDP it was a culture of fear and distrust. But we value something different and we're very proud of what we are building with this workforce for the benefit of all Manitobans.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: It's very alarming that the minister who said those words will not stand up here today and take ownership of them.

At Estimates, the minister continued on by saying that it's Manitobans in their 30s that are causing high career turnovers. This minister is completely wrong and owes millenniums an apology, Madam Speaker. I was born between 1981 and 1996, so is the member from Kildonan, who sits behind

the minister. Therefore, we are millennials, and I'm offended that this government would accuse us of having poor work ethics.

Does the minister truly believe that millennials do not contribute to Manitoba's economy?
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would remind members that we have a lot of students in the gallery right now and they are very carefully listening to questions and answers. And I think we would want to show that we are taking this issue very seriously and that we are showing respect for the people that are asking the questions and answering them.

So I would just urge that members show respect to the people that have the floor so that everybody can be heard properly.

Mr. Friesen: I appreciate the member's concerns, but there is no argument from our side. We understand what is needed in Manitoba. In careful conversation with the civil service, we are creating the framework in which there can be transformation, innovation. We want that new workforce.

Just this morning, I met another of our new interns coming to work in the area of transformation in the Treasury Board Secretariat, just a wonderful young person who's giving us their time and expertise in this province. That's exactly what we're building.

I do stand corrected on one subject, though. It wasn't the clerk of the Legislature, it was the Clerk of the Executive Council.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, you're right. This issue is serious and we need to change the status quo. Ageism goes both ways. People in their 30s are working harder than ever and they do not deserve such harsh judgment from this minister.

Will the minister apologize to the 323,000 millennials who make up the largest portion of employment here in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Manitoba has a number of things going for it, Madam Speaker, but nothing more than the honesty and work ethic of the people who live here.

Our understanding of those important qualities is what has allowed us to make sure that we stay focused on fixing the finances of our province, on repairing the services that were in such disrepair under the previous administration and in rebuilding the economy. Part of that is to make sure that we have an incredibly renewed civil service where people are committed to the work they do, feel appreciated and trusted. Part of it is also to make sure that the people who work here feel free from harassment, and that is something that happened too often in the past and all of us need to focus on making sure that we remove harassment and fear from the workplace for the good of all who work here.

And I would be remiss if I did not thank and congratulate the students from Carberry. It is a wonderful community. It's a community that has one of the longest running and best bonspiels in the province of Manitoba and it has some of the finest people in Manitoba living there. My sister student-taught there, my uncle had a business there, and Madam Speaker I just have to say I'm a shameless promoter of Carberry and I know the people of Carberry are shamelessly promoting their community every single chance they get. So I welcome the students who are here today.

Headway Community Mobilization Program Government Crime Prevention Investment

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, yesterday our government made an important investment in crime prevention for Steinbach and the surrounding region.

Can the Minister of Justice update the House on how yesterday's announcement in Steinbach will help build safer communities for our province?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank my honourable friend for that excellent question.

Yesterday I was honoured to join my colleague, the Minister of Health, along with Scott Kolody from the RCMP and Brenda Brown from Headway, to announce a \$50,000 investment in the Headway community mobilization program. This program, Madam Speaker, ensures that at-risk youth get the support that they need in order to keep them out of a life of crime in these communities.

It's a part of a \$250,000 overall investment in crime prevention in our province, which is a key

pillar to our criminal justice system modernization strategy.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to invest in programs to build safer communities in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Health Department Vacancy Rate Concerns

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, Madam Speaker, I know we were all surprised to hear the comments of the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade in Estimates about why he thought there were so many vacancies in his department.

The Minister of Health actually stated very different reasons for why there's so many vacancies in his department and he described his department as cautious and careful in replacing employees doing the work in the Department of Health.

I'd ask the Minister of Health: Why wouldn't this government want to fill important positions for the health of Manitobans?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I know the member's very sensitive about the issue of vacancies given the number of vacancies around his caucus table since he last looked at it before the previous election, Madam Speaker.

In the Department of Health, as I said in Estimates and I'll repeat, we're very proud of the fact that we're undergoing a lot of change, a lot of transformation, the creation of Shared Health, something that happens in every other province to ensure that you're looking at the things that have happened across the province and doing it in a unified, together way. As we transform into Shared Health we are being very cautious to ensure that we have the right positions going into Shared Health and to ensure that the system doesn't grow just for the sake of growth as it always did under the NDP, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Yesterday in Estimates, we learned that the Department of Health has now left vacant one in every six jobs outside of the Selkirk Mental Health Centre. That's even worse than the vacancies in Growth, Enterprise and Trade. These positions are in areas like mental health and additions, indigenous health, public health and active living. Not only are

these necessary to the health of Manitobans, they're actually critical to make Manitobans healthier and less likely to require acute-health-care services.

Will this minister commit today to a plan for staffing his department properly as set out in his own budget documents?

Mr. Goertzen: As we discussed yesterday in Estimates, and I'm happy to discuss it again with him this afternoon, Dr. Brock Wright is leading the effort in the preventative—in the clinical services and preventative services plan, Madam Speaker. That is a significant effort that never happened under the NDP.

* (14:20)

The challenge is to discuss that with the member opposite, because he's not interested in discussing services, or outcomes, or planning, or really getting results. All he's concerned about is the number of people who are working in the government, Madam Speaker. That's the only thing that he's concerned about.

Now, we take that seriously and we certainly value everybody who works in our system, but we want to ensure that the people who are working in our system are doing the right things and getting the right outcomes. He's not concerned about that. He just wants to know how many government employees are there, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Swan: Well, here's a question I asked the minister yesterday in Estimates. I asked him to tell me what new prevention initiatives his department had engaged in over the past 12 months and, despite having his staff there and despite being asked the question several times, the minister couldn't identify a single new prevention initiative in his department in the last year.

There's 123.15 EFT vacancies in his department, yet today, if you look on the government website, there are exactly three positions that are posted.

Is that because there aren't employees to do the work, or does the minister just not care?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member needs to go back and review Hansard if his memory isn't good. I indicated that when you undergo transformation of the system, when you are looking

to reduce wait times in emergency rooms, that is preventative care. When a person has to wait seven hours in an emergency room, that is not good care. That results in them perhaps getting other conditions, perhaps not being able to get the service that they need in a timely way. That is preventative care.

Only this member would believe, in this House, that reducing wait times in emergency rooms isn't about getting better care and preventing other things from happening in the future. That's his vision of health care. Our vision is much clearer and much better, Madam Speaker.

Cattle Producers Land Rental Prices

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture announced he is renting cattle producers' land to the highest bidder, including landowners from other provinces. It means uncertainty for young producers and higher rental prices.

Why is the minister making life harder for our young producers?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Finally, a question on Agriculture.

Just last week, Madam Speaker, we were able to meet with the federal minister and our provincial counterparts from across Canada to announce the Canadian agriculture partnership. In that program is several million dollars, in fact \$176 million over the next five years.

This investment will open the doors for our young producers, allowing them to have business risk management under the programs I'll get into the second question. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Marcelino: There's an obvious reason why the minister is doing this, raising the rent. He wants the money. He's going to sell out Manitoba producers to landowners in other—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marcelino: —provinces—other provinces. He doesn't have to do this. Saskatchewan has maintained its points system.

Will he reverse his decision for our young producers?

Mr. Eichler: I appreciate my new colleague, my critic and—offering some good advice, but I will put on the record to set it straight that we have the largest investments for our young producers here in Manitoba. We have loan guarantees of \$176,000 for each producer as it can be—as a rebate for mass loans. We also have \$275,000 in loan programs for young producers. We also have the 'cessibility' for Crown lands for young producers.

We will get it right where they tried to close agriculture down for the last 17 years.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I wish—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institutions to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university;

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

Medical Laboratory Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —is as follows:

(1) The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private sector service.

(2) It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services to allow medical clinics to seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

(3) Under the present provincial government, Dynacare, an Ontario-based subsidiary of a US company, has acquired Unicity labs, resulting in a monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

(4) With the creation of this monopoly, there has been the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has made it more difficult for some medical offices by changing the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charging some medical offices for collection services.

(5) These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and

sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services. The situation is particularly critical for patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life-threatening based on their individual health situations.

(6) Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all patients requiring immediate results, STAT's patients, such as patients with suspicious internal infections, be directed to its King Edward location. This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab rather than simply completing the test in their doctor's office. This new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patients' health. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than travelling twice, which increases cost to the public health-care system.

(7) Medical clinics and physicians' offices service thousands of patients in their communities and have structured their offices to provide a one-stop service, acting as a health-care front line that takes off some of the load from emergency rooms. The creation of this monopoly has been problematic to many medical clinics and physicians, hampering their ability to provide high-quality and complete service to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

* (14:30)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to request Dynacare to reopen the closed laboratories or allow Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to freely open labs in clinics which formerly housed labs that have been shut down by Dynacare.

(2) To urge the provincial government to ensure high-quality lab services for patients and a level playing field and competition in the provision of laboratory services to medical offices.

(3) To urge the provincial government to address this matter immediately in the interests of better patient-focused care and improved support for health professionals.

Signed by (1) Mark Resler, (2) Pat Manness, (3) Fayrouz Ibrahim and many others.

Vimy Arena

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of Assiniboia, St. James, greater Winnipeg area and Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the City to use the Vimy Arena site as an addictions treatment facility.

(2) The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and seniors homes, and the City has not considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface Industrial Park or the 20,000 acres at CentrePort.

(3) The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from park to commercial use to accommodate the addictions treatment facility and has not sought public input from the community to consider better uses for this facility consistent with a residential area.

(4) The provincial licensing system is akin to that of a dentist's office and is clearly insufficient for the planned use of the site by the City and Province.

(5) The proposed rezoning changes the fundamental nature of the community, zoned as a park area, and the concerns of the residents of St. James regarding safety, property values and the way—and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

(6) The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue collar and middle-class citizens who are family-oriented towards children and seniors and do not have the financial resources of other neighbourhoods.

(7) This type of facility would never be considered for the popular Assiniboine Park nor for Heubach Park, the park between Park Blvd. east and west, even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.

(8) The City and Province would be selling a—or will be setting a dangerous precedent with this process that could put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without proper consultation.

(9) The Province needs to be inclusive in its decision-making process and improve its programs

to prevent drug abuse and better supervise the provision or supervision of drug prescriptions that can lead to addictive behaviour.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addictions treatment facility.

These—this petition's been signed by Debra Coyston, Blaine [*phonetic*] Coyston, Ken Kunz and many others.

University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on or—and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it's still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional

support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for the petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 27–2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it's still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) University security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

* (14:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university; and

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

This petition is signed by Tanis Kolisnyk, Mitchell van Ineveld, Nikolas Friesen-Hughes and many other Manitobans.

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

And the reason for this petition are as follows:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or—and individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on or around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security and safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university; and

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death; and

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

And signed by many Manitobans. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

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

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, pursuant to rule 33(7), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko). The title of the resolution is Manitoba Curling Week.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet. The title of the resolution is Manitoba Curling Week.

* * *

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): In today's business, would you call Committee of Supply.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Estimates this afternoon.

The House will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)**

GROWTH, ENTERPRISE AND TRADE

* (14:50)

Madam Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Want to just do some further follow-up—or, go back to some of the questions that I was asking before and in the House about some of the positions that are vacant.

So there are 40 vacant positions in the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade. As of today, there are no external job postings, and since January 1st of this year, there have been less than 10.

Can the minister say just how he, or perhaps the Treasury Board, are intentionally managing these positions to keep them vacant?

Excuse me—let me re-ask the question: Can the minister just say that he or perhaps the Treasury Board are intentionally managing these positions to keep them vacant?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Well, I'll start out, first of all, by saying that in May of 2016, which would have been the end of the previous government, the start of the new government, the vacancy rate in GET was 19.6 per cent.

Mr. Lindsey: So there are 40 vacant positions in the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade. As of today, there are no external job postings. Since January 1st of this year, there has been less than 10.

So can the minister explain to me how he plans to reduce that number of vacancies?

Mr. Pedersen: For fiscal year 2015-16, there was a budget line of \$2,045,000, which is budgeted as a staff turnover allowance. In other words, that is the money from the—it's taken off of the total staffing costs. And that is money, that \$2,045,000, that is money that could not—that the department, in 2015-16, was not able to hire people, which is approximately, if you use about \$80,000 per salary, about 25 positions that the department did not have the funds to fill. Now, I'm talking about the previous administration. So they purposely could not fill those positions.

Moving forward to 2018-19, the number is, for the budgeted staff turnover allowance, is \$872,000, which is about \$1.17 million less than the previous government. In other words, they had \$1.17 million more to be able to fill positions. And, again, using about \$80,000 per salary would equate to about 25 positions. So there was actually salary to fill 14 additional positions that the previous government had no intention—no budget and no intention of ever filling.

Mr. Lindsey: So the previous government, from what you're telling me, had 14 positions that they weren't filling. This government, presently, has 40 positions that need to be filled. And the minister has repeatedly said he needs these positions, he's doing everything in his power to get these positions filled. But, again, since January 1st of this year, there has been less than 10 positions posted. So how does the minister plan to fill those positions if he doesn't post them?

Mr. Pedersen: I'll just repeat, again, that the vacancy rate in May of 2016 was 19.6 per cent, and if he wants me to use the numbers again, I can, but they were deliberately not filling positions before because they didn't have the budget—this is the previous government—whereas we have the budget and we will endeavour to fill the vacant positions.

Mr. Lindsey: So, for the umpteenth time, I'll ask the minister how he's planning to fill those positions when he doesn't have them posted.

Mr. Pedersen: Again, I'll just reiterate that this is a department-led initiative. This is not for myself or Cabinet members to be filling these positions.

This is led by the department. They are actively seeking to fill these positions. If he wants, I can read through the 17 steps again that go through a

hiring process and I'll gladly do that, too, if he—because there may be—again, as it's a department-led initiative—there may be people within those 17 steps right now as we discussed yesterday.

Mr. Lindsey: And, as we discussed yesterday, the minister was going to undertake to supply me a list of how many people were in each step of that process.

But the process, at some point in time, has to post vacancies. Presently, there are no postings, so are all these steps still at step one of the process, or does the minister plan to have his department post some of these vacancies so that they can be filled?

Mr. Pedersen: So, just to reiterate, there is—external postings are one way of filling positions. It's not the only way. There can be internal appointments; there can be secondments from other departments. There will be more postings coming up as those positions—as we work with the Civil Service Commission.

So the member doesn't seem to believe me, but there is a real effort to fill these positions, unlike what the previous government did, is—where they took the budget away so that there was no way they could fill those positions.

Mr. Lindsey: I would truly like to believe the minister, but I don't see any evidence. He keeps talking about all the steps and the process and there can be secondments; there can be this, there can be that.

So how many secondments has your—or has the minister's department requested to fill these positions? How many internal bulletins are out there to fill these positions?

* (15:00)

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Chair, as we spoke yesterday I believe it was, there—we're working with the Civil Service Commission as to find out where particular positions are within the 17 steps that we outlined.

When he talks about secondments or internal appointments, those will happen as they are. I—we will add that to the list of the Civil Service Commission as part of this entire list. So—but that's not to say that we couldn't have more in the future that aren't there right now, because that's how secondments and internal appointments tend to happen—more on an as-going basis. But we will attempt to get all that information to the member.

Mr. Lindsey: Does the minister in any way, shape or form think that, perhaps, his comments yesterday about—or Friday I guess it was—Thursday, maybe—about the reason for the absences is strictly because of the disloyalty of people that work in his department?

Does he think that will help attract good candidates to the vacancies in his department, or does he think that may, in fact, be detrimental?

Mr. Pedersen: So we all wish we could bring words back when we say them. Perhaps loyalty was the wrong word to use, and I will admit that. I shouldn't have used the word.

What I meant was, particularly, young people are much more mobile these days. There are career changes, whether they're—they—young people tend to—and I'm—not necessarily just young people, but employees tend to be much more mobile these days. They move to different careers, whether it's an advancement or something totally different. It's much different than the workplace of many years ago, where often a career was sort of a lifetime objective.

And so I certainly didn't mean anything dismissive or negative about workers, and I apologize for using the word loyalty. I should have used the word mobile.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the member for his apology and certainly hope that the people that he's offended with those comments will accept his apology as well. So we have heard the minister say that it's because millennials, young people, are mobile. It's been my experience that a lot of these people that are mobile are mobile simply because of the, either, cutting of jobs, which we've seen in this government department, that last year, 50-some jobs disappeared in year and there's planning to be some more cuts. So people don't see there being a long-term future, perhaps, with some of these positions within the department.

So what can the minister do to try and entice young people, qualified people, to come and work in his department, with the guarantee that it's going to be a long-term employment opportunity that isn't going to suffer from next year's budget axe.

Mr. Pedersen: I'm really glad the member asked that question. In terms of encouraging new employees to come and work in—within our civil service, this is part of our transformation strategy that we've got, and we talked a little bit about transformation strategy yesterday. It's about creating a new work

culture, creating a new culture around work within the civil service, whether it's in this building or civil service in general. We will not have a culture of fear, a culture of suck-it-up, as what was in—bullying that was rampant in the previous government. We have been—we have our no-wrong-door policy. And we feel that that will be a huge step, for starters, in encouraging people to come and work, to have meaningful careers in the civil service.

Mr. Lindsey: The minister talks about transformation and some of these buzz word terms that he uses. Certainly, people in the private sector have seen similar terms used as it led to job cuts, less security, workers attacking workers to try and maintain a job. It didn't lead to greater job security. That's kind of been the experience of a lot of work places as they've gone through the quote, transformation process. So I'm not sure where the minister hopes to go, exactly, with this process. I hope that he doesn't see it as being a house cleaning exercise that will cause more long-term employees to want to vacate the property and lead to less new people really being interested in long-term positions.

So, again, just to get back to the empty positions, that in and of itself, doesn't make employees feel good coming to work if they're having to double up the amount of work they're doing; they're seeing things that should be done not being done. It leads to their frustration level and, certainly, people that are dealing with the general public sense the general public's frustration when they're trying to get things done and the absence of workers is not facilitating that.

* (15:10)

So, again, I ask the minister to really give us a real strong sense of what it is, exactly, that his department is doing to fill the 40 vacant positions that they presently have.

Mr. Pedersen: So transformation really started when we took over government because we came into this—into government with a 19.6 per cent vacancy rate. There was a large turnover of staff happening previous to this, previous to our government coming in. So I can appreciate the member's negativity because that's what he saw before. But—and he keeps asking how we will fill these positions, and it's taking some time to do it. We have reduced our vacancy rate from 19.6 down to around 12 per cent right now, and we're working on this. But it's about creating a new work culture. It's—we're moving away—we are rapidly and insist on moving away

from this culture of fear and this culture of suck it up, which we heard from, from a great many instances of that.

Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade is very adamant about promoting exciting careers, long-term careers, if the employee chooses to do that. It's about customer service. It's about engaging our staff, and we have—I know I've heard back from the staff; they have regular interaction with staff, hearing about the good ideas that come forward and how we can make the department even better. We urge that input from within—from the staff within Growth, Enterprise and Trade. And, again, it's about creating that positive environment when—we are getting there. We've gone a long ways now within this department in two years to turn that staff excitement up and to have staff excited about coming to work because that's how you manage to keep employees. That's how you manage to attract employees. And I can appreciate that the member just doesn't realize how that is because he's never had experience with that, but for any of us who have been in the private sector and come within—to work within government, we know that that's how you keep employees, is by keeping happy employees, by—and that's how you encourage more employees to come and work for you by creating a positive environment.

So the member can talk all the negativity he wants, but I know that within our department, Growth, Enterprise and Trade—I can't speak for other departments, and I won't speak for other departments—but within this department, we have turned that culture around from fear and that suck-it-up mentality to exciting careers and positive environment.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Chairperson: The honourable from Fort Garry-Riverview, on a point of order.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Thank you, Madam Chair. I find that the minister has used a certain phrase three times now in the past six minutes. I personally don't want to repeat that phrase. It strikes me as being, if not unparliamentary then, not—something that—kind of language we want to be using in the committee.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable member for Morris, on the same point of order.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): On the same point of order, Madam Chair. The comment the—my colleague across the way finds—with disdain, actually—is a comment that arose during his time in office when female staff under them were told to shut up and suck it up when issues of sexual harassment or sexual abuse came forward by staff.

So I don't believe the minister quoting former NDP staff in relaying that policy that was in that culture of fear and concealment that the NDP had during their 17 years towards staffers is inappropriate.

Madam Chairperson: I will say that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview does have a point of order that the same words that were used in some of these exchanges have been cautioned in the past.

So I'm just going to encourage all members to be very careful with their choice of words so that we can continue with a respectful dialogue.

Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Lindsey: So Bill 28, do you think that—does the minister think that made people excited to come to work?

Mr. Pedersen: Sorry, Madam Chair, but I just didn't quite catch that question. Can the member repeat that?

Mr. Lindsey: Does the minister think that Bill 28, the bill that froze people's wages, does he think that made people excited to come to work?

Mr. Pedersen: Bill 28 is from the Finance Minister. He's better to ask the Finance Minister that question about—he's the sponsor of that bill.

Mr. Lindsey: I'm fully well aware that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) sponsored that bill. I'm asking this minister if he believes that that bill helped in his stated goal of having a workplace that people want to come to work at and are happy to work at.

Mr. Pedersen: I'll leave the speculation up to the member.

Mr. Lindsey: I guess it's not really speculation when this minister's government has frozen people's wages that work in his department as well as others. You'd think it would be a pretty simple answer. Yes or no, does he think that helped improve morale within his department?

* (15:20)

Mr. Pedersen: Well, our government has moved from a culture of discouragement to a respectful, engaged workforce because we know a respectful, engaged workforce is a powerful motivator for people to come to work, to give their all to their jobs, where our employees' opinions matter and they are free to give those opinions to make sure—and as they feel that they will help to increase the efficiency and make the department work even better.

So we've—we encourage this. I know this is, perhaps, difficult for the member to comprehend, but that's the type of workforce that we are encouraging and that we've seen happen in just two years. And it takes a long time to move from that culture of discouragement to a respectful, engaged workforce, but we have already done so much for that in just two years.

Mr. Lindsey: I do believe that the minister and I will probably disagree on those statements for many years to come, but in my humble opinion, cutting or freezing workers' wages does not lead to a happy and productive workforce. But I guess if that's the way the minister believes—or this government believes that that's how they'll build a committed bunch of workers is by freezing their wages and stuff, that's unfortunately what he's going to do.

So, just to move off of that for a couple of minutes and get back to some questions about trade, I gave the minister a document yesterday, Annex 520.1, a schedule of Canada procurement exceptions. And the minister seemed to think that that schedule was from the European free trade agreement when, in fact, it is a schedule that's attached to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

Does the minister agree with that now?

Mr. Pedersen: As I explained yesterday, our Trade people within the department are very busy right now with NAFTA. I did commit to make sure that we got a full explanation of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and the appendixes which he provided us. And we—the offer is still there. We will provide a full explanation to those appendixes that he supplied us.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, I find that to be quite an extraordinary answer from a minister of this government who's charged with being the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade—that he couldn't even be bothered to do a simple look at the documents last night to determine that, in fact, this document is an annex to the Canadian Free Trade

Agreement. He has to wait for a person within his department to come and tell him yes, yes, that's exactly what it is before he can answer any questions.

And I understand that there's a lot of things in this annex, as there are a lot of things in the overall free trade agreement. And I certainly don't claim to be an expert on it, but the minister could at the very least—if he didn't want to look himself because he was too busy, could have had somebody look at the agreement and determine that this, in fact, was an annex to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

So maybe the minister could get somebody to just have a quick look at that right now so that we could at least answer that question without having to wait for his trade experts.

Mr. Pedersen: I'll—yesterday when we spoke about this, I did agree to provide information about what this—these documents mean within the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

We have staff working on this and they are—as I indicated, they are very busy and we will get that information to the member as soon as possible. But they are very busy, too. And you know—just have to appreciate this is in addition to all the other good work that our staff is doing, that they will get this information back to you and so that you have a clear understanding of what these are in the agreements.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, I would just point out to the minister that this is the Estimates process where we get to ask questions and he's to provide some sort of answer. Unfortunately, in this case, it appears that he refuses to answer whether he thinks this document is a part of the free trade agreement because he has to wait for his staff to come.

He's said a couple of times—once in Estimates and once again today in the House—he's suggested that the member from Flin Flon doesn't know what he's talking about when it comes to these trade agreements. So I would again ask the minister for an apology for that because these documents are, in fact, a part of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Now, if he can't give me that apology today, I guess I will ask for it in the future once he gets somebody to point out to him from his department that this annex is a part of the free trade agreement.

So will the minister commit to doing that?

Mr. Pedersen: I can always agree with the member from Flin Flon when he described his own self-lack of understanding of this.

* (15:30)

Mr. Lindsey: I guess, before I proceed with this, the minister really is making disparaging remarks that, in my opinion, are not warranted. And, suggesting that, at some point in time, I said I didn't know what I was talking about is really a warped interpretation of facts. So I would request the minister withdraw those comments at this point.

Mr. Pedersen: My colleague from Morris has passed me along a little information that—and I know when we started this process of Estimates, we had already gotten—got some information back to the member that he requested that we didn't have at our fingertips.

I explained to him that we are working on getting more information to him in a timely manner, and I would just remind the member that in the previous government, when Gord Mackintosh was minister of Conservation, it took almost 12 months to get Estimates questions back to the critic. And so we are committed to getting this information in a timely manner to the member, and we will endeavour to do that.

Mr. Lindsey: So I sense no apology is forthcoming from the minister for, again, suggesting that I've said things that I didn't say.

I was fully prepared to suggest to the minister that once he is able get someone to tell him the correct answer, that we have a complete briefing on that, and I think I would still request that the minister, seeing as he's not capable of answering questions about the trade agreement for which he's the minister of, that somewhere outside of the Estimates process, perhaps, we sit down with his Trade people and go through our questions and have them answered properly at that point in time.

Mr. Pedersen: That's an excellent suggestion, and that would probably save a few trees, in terms of paperwork, because we can get our trade people in and we can set up that meeting, either my office or somewhere in the Leg. here, and we can go through the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and, if he wants, the New West Partnership, because I know they're familiar with both those.

So we can do that and just make note of it for Hansard that we are going to do that instead of supplying a written response to his trade questions.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the minister for that. I'm still going to, at that point in time, I guess, request an apology, once he determines that, in fact, the wrong one of us has been accused of not knowing what he talks about. So I look forward to that apology coming when we have that meeting, so let's just move on.

I did have a lot of questions around the free trade agreement, but the Minister of Trade can't answer those questions. Just one question before I move off that: Was this minister the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade at the time that this free trade agreement was signed?

Mr. Pedersen: The Canadian Free Trade Agreement became effective July 1st, 2017, so I was not yet minister in that time. It was August 17th of 2017. There was a Cabinet shuffle and the previous minister, Cullen, was also in Growth, Enterprise and Trade when the New West Partnership Agreement was signed.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, that's quite astounding. It didn't take him long to find out that he wasn't the minister when the agreement was signed. How did he find that out so quickly?

Mr. Pedersen: It's public information.

Mr. Lindsey: As is the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

So, let's move on.

How many current active loans are there under the Manitoba Industrial Opportunities Program?

Mr. Pedersen: The Manitoba Development Corporation Annual Report, March 2017—as of March 31st, 2017, the program has 15 active loans to 11 companies, totalling \$65 million under management with 2,342 Manitoba full-time equivalent jobs required for the loan agreements, and 2,413 Manitoba full-time equivalent jobs maintained.

Mr. Lindsey: So the minister talks about there being 15 active loans to 11 different companies.

Can the minister list the names of the current companies with MIOP loans?

Mr. Pedersen: So again, this is as of March 31st, 2017, and again, this is a public document—Manitoba Development Corporation.

The following loans are: ColorAd Packaging (3759326 Canada Ltd.), \$3,153,132; CP Loan Enterprises Ltd., \$13,175,000; Glacier L.P. at \$6,745,421; HD-Petroleum, Inc., \$3,100,000; ARxIUM, formerly Intelligent Hospital Systems Inc., \$306,667; Magellan Aerospace Ltd., \$14,990,000; Medicare Inc., \$2,222,222; premier horticultural ltd., \$500,000; Sightline Innovation Inc., \$2 million; 6381023 Manitoba Ltd., operating as True North Foods, \$2,843,750; Winnipeg Airports Authority Inc., \$15,980,155, for a subtotal of \$65,016,346, for a net accrued and capitalized interest of \$583,776 for a total of—sorry—total of \$65,600,122.

*(15:40)

Mr. Lindsey: So, just to clear up, the minister's talking about the loans under the Manitoba Industrial Opportunities Program.

Mr. Pedersen: That's correct. There—the acronym for that is known as MIOP.

Mr. Lindsey: The minister does love his 'anacronyms.'

Can the minister tell me the net value of assets under the Manitoba Development Corporation?

Mr. Pedersen: So Manitoba Development Corporation audited statement as of March 31st, 2017: total assets of \$179,657,191; liabilities of \$124,000,117—117,449—let me try that one again—\$124,117,449. Your accumulated surplus comes back as \$55,539,742. So your net assets then become—or your contingencies become \$179,657,191.

Mr. Lindsey: So those were the numbers for 2016-2017. Is there anything available that is more current, or would the minister, as a undertaking, agree to provide more current information when it is available?

Mr. Pedersen: So this statement that I just read out to him was as of March 31st, 2017, so obviously we've just finished year-end, March 31st, 2018, so the statement needs to be prepared and audited, and it will be tabled in the House this fall when we sit again.

I do have 2016 numbers if he's interested in those.

Mr. Lindsey: Sure, let's hear those numbers.

Mr. Pedersen: So this would be for March 31st, 2016: assets of \$185,010,105; liabilities

of \$133,175,459; accumulated surplus of \$51,834,646. Going back to—gives you total assets of \$185,010,105.

Mr. Lindsey: So the net value of the assets at the end of 2016 were approximately \$185 million; at the end of 2017, they're approximately 179, 180 million, is that correct?

Mr. Pedersen: That would be correct.

Mr. Lindsey: Can the minister explain the difference in the assets?

Mr. Pedersen: So, under assets, cash and cash equivalents: so I will give you 2017 numbers and then 2016 numbers.

So cash and cash equivalents, 2017 is \$44,030,190; 2016 is \$36,336,538.

Under accounts receivable for 2017, it was \$277,689, and, for 2016, \$295,756.

Loans receivable: \$54,382,578, and, in 2016, it was \$73,295,947.

Portfolio investments: 2017 was \$17,056,252, and, in 2016, \$21,296,105.

And restricted funds: 2017 is \$63,672,652, and 2016 is \$53,785,759. And there was prepaid expenses in 2017 which counts as an asset of \$237,830 in 2017. And in 2016, there was no prepaid expenses.

* (15:50)

So that makes for a difference of approximately 6 and a half million dollars' difference: \$179,657,191 in 2017 versus in 2016, \$185,010,105.

Mr. Lindsey: Okay. So, under the Manitoba Opportunities Fund, in the 2016-17 it was one thirty-five. Can the minister tell me what it was at the end of 2016?

Mr. Pedersen: So the Manitoba Opportunities Fund Ltd. as of March 31st, 2017, I can go through each of these lines, if you want, but I'll go to financial assets, total financial assets of \$135,876,509 in 2017. In 2016, it is \$187,889,423 with liabilities of—which is accounts payable and borrowing—so \$121,459,502 in 2017. In 2016, it's \$175,645,186. So net financial assets in 2017 is \$14,417,007 versus in 2016, \$12,244,237. And then we have non-financial assets, which is deferred charges, so it makes for an accumulated surplus, because you add the liabilities plus the non-financial assets, accumulated surplus

then becomes \$16,326,545 for 2017 and \$15,940,184 in 2016.

Mr. Allum: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I want to return to the discussion that the minister was having with my colleague around the use of the term—whether there was no loyalty, I suppose, is what he had said, and I appreciate that he had rendered an apology for using that term and went on to describe it as a—more of the young people are mobile. I think the reality is, though, and I hope you would agree, is that more and more young people are finding that employment is precarious. That means that it's less than full-time; wages aren't great; benefits are almost non-existent; working conditions can be brutal. And so they're forced to move from job to job to job, and it will certainly be one of the great challenges going forward in the 21st century.

So I have to ask him: Do you have a jobs plan for precarious labour going forward?

Mr. Pedersen: Well, I don't agree with the member's assertion about precarious. I think we've got—and I gave lots of good examples in question period today of the great jobs that are happening in Manitoba—that have just—are happening as of these days, and—because of our open-for-business environment that we've created in Manitoba.

So I don't agree with his assertion of precarious.

Mr. Allum: Well, of course the creation of full-time jobs is always a good thing, and—but you're talking, I think, in question period maybe, I don't know, upwards of maybe 1,000 new jobs. We're talking about a whole generation of young people who are looking at precarious labour going forward. You may not agree with it, but it's—he may not agree with it, but it's a reality that his government needs to take very, very seriously and so I want to reiterate the question again.

Does he have a jobs plan to address precarious labour, and if he doesn't, does he have a jobs plan at all?

Madam Chairperson: I'd just like to remind members if they'd like to have conversations to be away from the table and away from the mics. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Speaking of respectful workplaces.

Jobs are the basis of any economy and in Manitoba we certainly take jobs and job training—I think the member's question in terms of education

and training, and preparing people for the workplace, which was of a lot of discussion around when companies like Ubisoft come here.

They were very interested in the training available. They very much like the universities—all the universities in Manitoba, Winnipeg, Brandon. They were very impressed with Red River College. They visited Sisler school for their tech training that's happening there, and I can tell you that at the Ubisoft launch on Friday, there was—the excitement from those students at Sisler school, the thoughts of having these jobs available in Manitoba was—for some of them was actually somewhat overwhelming, they were so excited.

* (16:00)

And so, as we continue to have our open-for-business policy here in Manitoba where we encourage companies to—either to come in, but also for those companies—and I'll use HyLife Foods as an example—of expanding and—further expanding their business in here. That's the jobs and these are highly skilled jobs that they are creating in Manitoba. And that's good for our economy and it makes for a very booming economy here in Manitoba.

Mr. Allum: Well, I think we could agree that training is a good thing, but there actually has to be jobs there for trained employees. And it—he knows himself if he's reviewed the stats that thousands of full-time jobs have been lost in Manitoba on his government's watch in the last two years.

He would also know that the forecast for every—of almost every single reputable economic development research organization, Conference Board of Canada and such, knows that Manitoba's growth is going to lag behind the rest of the country—probably under 2 per cent in the year. That's going to mean that there's going to be significant unemployment in addition to precarious labour.

So I want to ask him one last time today, Madam Chair, if he has a jobs plan at all. And, if so, where would I find it?

Mr. Pedersen: One of the things that Ubisoft talked about before the announcement was public, and since it's been public they have also continued to say that one of the things that they're very adamant about doing is attracting expatriate Manitobans—Manitobans who have moved out of the province since 1999 that have the tech training. They're going to encourage them to come back to Manitoba to work for Ubisoft here in Winnipeg. And that is a powerful

statement that says we have lost people out of Manitoba because of a lack of opportunity when the NDP was in government, and now they see opportunity to come here—to come back to Manitoba, which is great for all of Manitoba.

And, you know, the member keeps talking about a strategy. Our strategy is an economic strategy. And if you grow the economy—when you grow the economy, and like we have been encouraging businesses to do—and government does not build an economy; business builds an economy. And that's where the jobs are. And so we want to encourage business to continue to expand here in Manitoba, and we will continue the great work that we've been doing over the last two years.

Mr. Lindsey: I believe that we will wrap things up now.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, I will now deal with the resolutions.

Resolution 10.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$46,156,000 for Growth, Enterprise and Trade, Enterprise, Innovation and Trade, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,471,000 for Growth, Enterprise and Trade, Labour and Regulatory Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,360,000 for Growth, Enterprise and Trade, Resource Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,555,000 for Growth, Enterprise and Trade, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 10.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 10.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Lindsey: I move that line item 10.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

Madam Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), that line item 10.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

The motion is in order. Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Madam Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Chairperson: All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Lindsey: I request a recorded vote.

Madam Chairperson: A formal vote has been requested by two members.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now recess to allow this matter to be reported and for members to proceed to the Chamber for the vote.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:00)

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): First off, I'd just like to apologize for being late today. I was just dealing with a few things in the hallway and saying hello to some of the seniors who were in the gallery, but, again, I realize I'm keeping a lot of folks around the table waiting, in particular the member from Riding Mountain on the edge of his seat there, waiting for us to get into all the newspaper notice changes that are coming down the pipe and stuff like that. So just want to say I'm sorry before I start taking the shots at others around the table.

So we were talking about Churchill in question period a little bit today. I'm just wondering if the Premier does have additional information on the Polar Bear Alert Program that we were questioning him about and whether he can spell out what impact that \$300,000 reduction will have on services in Churchill.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I don't have any information to add, but I commit to pulling together whatever information I can and presenting it to the member at an early—at a later opportunity.

Mr. Kinew: Thank you, and I appreciate the undertaking there.

I'd like to ask, we've—like, as the opposition, we've brought this filing before the Canadian Transportation Agency, federal regulator for railways, the idea being this is an agency that can order the rail line to be repaired, and if, you know, the company refuses to comply, then potentially some sort of damages could be awarded, and that, in turn, could be used by Churchill, perhaps other communities impacted by the rail line closure.

Now, we've sort of been proceeding with this on our own. However, I would like to ask the First Minister whether he is prepared to get involved and support the brief and, you know, maybe put the Justice Department officials to work in helping this filing with the CTA.

Mr. Pallister: We'll continue to work with the federal government, the community, all concerned, towards solutions.

We've recognized that past practices of the previous administration involved itself directly in subsidization on various initiatives which allowed the federal government to defer, postpone or avoid its responsibilities in respect of not only the rail line but various other things that were in their purview and that didn't work very well, in fact, that worked

counter to achieving actual outcomes that would benefit the community in the long term. That's best evidenced by the lack of access to repairs on that rail line over the last number of months, a source of frustration to all of us.

So we've taken a position, and continue to: We'll work co-operatively with the federal government. We'll do everything we can on our—in our areas of constitutional responsibility and primacy, and we will let the federal government take the lead in their areas of rail and port, with certainly ongoing emphasis on the need for action and results at their end.

Mr. Kinew: So in the CTA filing, the owner of the rail line tried to have, you know, our move here dismissed, arguing that we didn't have standing, and that was dismissed.

The CTA decided that they would, in fact, hear it, which to me, suggests that this is a good venue to try and get some form of redress on behalf of the people of Churchill, and it does offer an opportunity to do so that would be in conjunction with the federal government. It does address the jurisdictional question that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) raises there.

So I just ask again: Why not get involved with the CTA filing?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we're taking the lead in a number of other avenues that we think will be more productive, and so that's where we'll continue to emphasize our actions and we'll pursue results. The—I don't wish to belittle or criticize the NDP in any way, though, some might say that their actions were taken more for show than for actual results. We'll pursue results.

Mr. Kinew: So why not try and get an order against the company to fix the rail line?

Mr. Pallister: Lots of room for debate about practices currently, and certainly more room to speculate on why practices in the past led to this situation.

The previous administration elected to enter into so-called shared funding arrangements to subsidize OmniTRAX or whatever name it chooses to operate under currently. That's led in many ways to the inaction we see now, the legal quandary the member is choosing to focus on as part of that. Of course, there's also ongoing lawsuits from OmniTRAX as a consequence of previous agreements entered into by the NDP government. All of that, by way of saying

that the approach taken by the NDP in the past didn't get better results for the people of Churchill, and the present situation provides clear evidence of that fact.

Now the member is suggesting court action—necessitated as a consequence, at least in part, of the choices made by the previous administration—would be the solution. He's suggesting that the solution lies somehow in court, and the court action is at least in part due to the fact that the NDP took the actions it took over previous years. So now he's proposing to solve the problem in court, which the NDP created through subsidy in the past number of years.

We're choosing instead to focus on investing in Churchill, its people, protecting them, protecting them through this difficult time, at an ongoing basis thereafter. We've chosen to commit a half a billion dollars over the next decade to investing in that community, including rebuilding the town centre that was in such bad repair.

Much of the previous administration's time was marked with very high and excessively growing payrolls, but a neglect on the capital investment side, and Churchill, of all communities, sees that and has seen it, and we're committed to repairing what was broken under the previous administration.

Mr. Kinew: Big part of Churchill's current challenges comes from the former federal government's decision to do with—do away with the Canadian Wheat Board.

So again, the, you know, Premier's party shares in that responsibility as well. But, you know, setting some of that discussion aside, it just seems like there's a pretty direct path here to get involved with the CTA brief, devote a little bit of Justice Department officials' time towards getting involved and potentially score something tangible for the people of Churchill as well as with—as well as for other communities affected by the rail line washout. So I'll leave that for the Premier's consideration.

* (15:10)

I know that we were talking about carbon tax yesterday, and some of the plans have yet to be revealed; some of them have yet to be announced even though there's been a few announcements already. I'm wondering if the Premier could tell us when he'll present the details regarding the plan for large polluters in Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Those discussions are under way. The member—I don't believe the member's yet had the

opportunity to read our green plan document, and that might help to provide him with some additional information that would assist him in his questions.

The—as we know, the previous government didn't have a green plan. There was a back-of-the-napkin proposal at the tail end, just before the last election, to take every diesel- and gas-powered vehicle off the roads in Manitoba in order to achieve certain targets. That wasn't realistic then and certainly isn't one we're going to follow now. And there was also some vague reference to whacking six or seven large polluters in the province and ignoring everybody else. And that isn't going to fly either. So the—there was no plan prior to our coming to government, and there is a plan now, and it's a good plan, and it makes sense for Manitoba's economy and it makes sense for our environment as well.

But it's in everyone's interest to address these issues, not to defer, postpone or delay as the NDP did repeatedly, year after year after year, never a target met, never a target set that was met and never a target set that wasn't missed. And that isn't the way that we respect the sustainable management of our resources—land, air, water, anything else. So we'll take a sustainable approach to this. We've spent a lot of time consulting and working with Manitobans who care about this issue—these issues, because there are many.

But one thing we certainly won't do is support the member's plan to go 50 and go \$2 billion out of the pockets of Manitobans with nothing going back to them in the form of reduced taxes. That's dangerous for our economy; it's dangerous for our environment as well. People who are struggling to make ends meet have difficulty participating in green programs, and the federal government needs to understand that if it continues with its higher tax policies it will also make it difficult if not impossible for Manitoba—Manitobans, but Canadians generally, to participate in green initiatives. Its reductions in health-care transfers, for example, make it harder on every province to support what is demographically very likely the largest challenge that the Canadian provinces will face, and that's the continual response, necessitated by an aging population, to our health-care needs. They are growing. They'll continue to grow.

One thing is certain: There isn't a single expert, not a single study, that supports the federal government's decision to reduce those transfers to 3 per cent incremental growth—not one. We've had

studies done by a wide-ranging number of think tanks and institutes that focus on health-care policy and on fiscal policy. Nobody supports that. Prime Minister didn't run on doing it, just did it. And the consequence of that is there are a lot less resources available to provincial governments across the country. We're looking at a lot of our own initiatives. We're looking at initiatives where we'll partner with the federal government. But there are limits to the resources that can be made available.

Now, the member is suggesting he'll take \$2 billion out of the pockets of Manitobans; he'll have tons of resources for lots of green initiatives. But the problem with that is it sacrifices our economic potential and the economic future of Manitobans in the mix—adds up to about \$3,000 per taxpayer less over the next four years; 3,000 bucks not small change for Manitoba households, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet, who want that money back in their hands.

The member alluded to the fact it isn't revenue neutral in the first year, whatever, yesterday. And that's fine. I admitted to that the first day when I talked to a reporter for one of our local papers. But I also am dedicated to making sure it is revenue neutral within the four-year period, in less time than that, and we'll make sure we achieve that goal because we are concerned about the impact on Manitoba families of higher NDP hydro rates, for example, of higher interest rates on their mortgages, of higher costs with local taxes and—not limited to local taxes but other fees and taxes that are coming in, eroding the purchasing power of Manitoba families. We're concerned about that. We see that as a threat to Manitobans in a real way, a threat to their ability to find their own financial security and to invest in their future and the future of their children.

And so for that reason we're not going to entertain the idea the member's put forward of doubling the—doubling for nothing the carbon levy. We don't believe it's anything but dangerous to the people of Manitoba, and we won't support it.

Mr. Kinew: So a lot of inaccuracies there, but I guess two that stand out are, you know, one, that—you know, I've said very consistently that the carbon price should be revenue neutral. Premier (Mr. Pallister) has said otherwise, said you know, sometime in the future—potentially—he wants to see it become revenue neutral.

And the other thing is that he's bringing it in at two and a half times higher than what it could be.

So that's more than double—more than double trouble, I think—two and a half times the trouble there if—I think I'm looking at the numbers correctly.

And then, you know, there was a brief mention there of the health-care escalator being reduced. So again, an historic investment when the provincial government reduces the percentage increase each year, but when the federal government does the same, it's a cut that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has to decry and cry foul on. But I just remind him that, you know, as he tries to criticize where did the idea for this come from, it actually came from the former prime minister that he served under. It was Prime Minister Harper who proposed to reduce the health-care escalator by this amount.

So, again, I think the federal government should do a better job of living up to its obligations on health care, but you know, the Premier should be consistent at least when he's talking about these matters.

I want to ask about the changes to the credit union tax credit. I'm wondering which specific credit unions or organizations did the Premier speak with before bringing about this change.

Mr. Pallister: Well, I appreciate the member putting on record that he supports the federal government in their reduction of transfer support for health care. He's finally come clean on that. He's been silent up 'til now, and now we have it on the record of Hansard that he supports the federal government in their reduced support for health care. This—interesting that the member would take that position, but I understand that trying to coattail on the popularity of the federal government is something some people like to do.

The—he's quite right, though. The Prime Minister—former prime minister proposed to reduce support for transfers, and I opposed it then, and I oppose it now when Prime Minister Trudeau is proposing to do it. I'll stand up for Manitobans on supporting health care even as the member opposite now finally comes clean in his opposition to doing so.

On the issue of carbon tax, the strong consensus of Manitobans—who we consulted with—was they wanted a level levy. And the member now has said that he wants 50 and supports it. Using the old hackneyed phrase about revenue neutrality when he hasn't put out how he's going to spend that \$2 billion he's proposing to take is not going to work. That's

ducking for cover; that's not providing detail. We've provided detail, got a detailed plan and we've made it public, and it's the result of consulting with Manitobans.

The member has not put out a detailed plan. The previous government did not, and neither is he now. He has only said that he would like to get credit for spending the money that comes from the levy, and that he has certainly been consistent in saying. I have been consistent in saying that I don't agree with that approach. I think the money should be given back or left with Manitobans who work very hard to get it in the first place. And so that's why we've announced, already, plans to raise the basic personal exemption by \$2,020 by 2020, which the member is opposed to. He wants the money so he can spend it. I want it back in the hands of Manitobans.

We have proposed to raise the small business tax levels for their tax rate from \$450,000 to \$500,000, something the NDP government, when it was running for re-election in the 11th election, promised it would do and failed to do. It broke its commitment. The member has been silent on that issue. I can only assume that if he wants to spend all the money himself on green strategies then it's not going back to small business owners in Manitoba.

In addition, we have committed to restoring the PST to the level of 7 per cent, which is where it was promised it would be in that same early election in '11 by the NDP administration when they campaigned for re-election. They said it would be ridiculous nonsense that it would be raised, while we have found under FIPPA, that they were discussing raising it even before the election.

* (15:20)

They then implemented a broadening of it, which added over \$200 million of revenue to their government while subtracting \$200 million from Manitobans. Working Manitobans had to pay more for their benefits at work. Small-business owners had to pay more to contribute to match their contributions for those same benefits, 7 per cent more. People who had insured their homes—most people do—and that's because they care about protecting their assets in case of loss, in case of fire, for example—bought that insurance and paid 7 per cent more for it than they were told they'd have to.

Previous administration made those kinds of commitments to the people of Manitoba when it

came to not raising taxes and then jacked them up. The member is repeating that now by saying that he's going to make our province greener, and he's going to do it by taking \$2 billion out of the hands of Manitoba families and seniors and small businesses, more than should come out of their hands, over the next four years alone.

Now, you know, I think, Mr. Chair, that the member needs to consider that the previous administration had some problems and he needs to study that history and learn from it, not repeat those mistakes. He seems to be wanting to repeat them.

Mr. Kinew: Bit of a strange answer to a question about credit unions. I mean, if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) wants to keep talking about carbon taxes, I guess we can. I don't think it's in his best interest. I know a lot of people in his base are feeling alienated by the policy decisions that he's making.

Spoken to people who tell me they've torn up their PC membership cards as a result of this policy. I've spoken to other people who've, you know, said they don't understand where he's coming from. Heard that on the doorstep as well, from Conservative supporters. So the Premier wants to keep talking about carbon taxes, though he doesn't seem to be making much sense to very many people.

Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Chambers of Commerce, again, didn't really seem to be onside, nor were a lot of commentators analyzing the plan, probably because it's not revenue-neutral, meaning it will be a net tax imposed on Manitobans and there's no details or no commitment to reducing emissions, no tangible programs that will actually reduce emissions nor target us to meet the Paris climate accord targets.

So I'll, you know, indulge the Premier if he wants to talk about that again for an afternoon. We can do that. But, again, the question was about the tax credit for credit unions. It's going to be phased out. I'm curious as to the rationale and where this came from.

Can the Premier tell us which credit unions or other organizations he consulted with before announcing that he would phase out this tax credit?

Mr. Pallister: It's an issue of credibility, and it's also, you know, the member can spout about having people oppose plans all he wants. The fact of the matter is the NDP never had a plan to fix the environment. They never had a plan to green the province, and so if he doesn't want to be accountable

for the previous government, and I know he doesn't—that's fine—but he is leading a party that has a record. And that record is one of inattentiveness to the very issues that Manitobans care most about.

One of those is having a green province. Manitobans value that. We take pride in that. I'm not suggesting to the member that he's wrong in citing one person he met at a door who doesn't want to have a green province; that's fine. People have the right to have different views.

His views are certainly different, I expect, on a number of issues, but the fact remains that for most Manitobans, having a plan to protect our environment matters. And it matters that the previous government didn't have one. The Auditor General's report was released just last year, and it evaluated the previous administration's record on this, and the comments were, and I'll quote from page 1 now: we found a lack of progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as in developing a plan for adapting to climate change impact.

Now the member's been rather harshly critical of our plan, but fails to acknowledge the fact that the NDP, in 16 years of government, according to the Auditor General's report of just last year, didn't have a plan at all. Nothing much to criticize there, because there wasn't a plan.

Now it says that they did put a plan in place so I, you know, stand corrected; however, they were made aware by the fall of 2009 that their 2008 plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions would not succeed. However, the plan wasn't updated until just before the last provincial election in December of '15, which says a lot about the sincerity of the previous administration actually addressing the threat of climate change.

Now, the member claims that if his green initiatives package with his \$2 million he'll get to invest by taking it from Manitobans could solve all the problems, but he hasn't presented a plan. He hasn't written anything down. We have no idea where that money's going to come from, except we know that it'll come from higher taxes that Manitobans will pay.

I welcome him putting his plan in writing because I think it would require analysis and scrutiny, something that couldn't be given to the previous NDP environmental plan because it—well, it didn't bear scrutiny. But the member most certainly has already said that he's supportive of double

for nothing, and he has said that he's opposed to reducing taxes—income, personal sales and small business taxes, so he clearly is going to find lots of money so he can heap credit on himself with his gargantuan buildup of government apparatus to do what his previous colleagues never did.

The Auditor General's report 2017 is very explicit. I encourage him to read it and learn from it. It says in its table of contents that there were gaps in management processes for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, that the plans that were put forward were inadequate, that the targets for the 2008 plan and the related 2012 plan were not updated, that better practices were needed in setting targets, that no comprehensive analysis of different approaches was done, that initiatives in 2015 plan lacked details. That was the one just on the eve of the provincial election done on the back of a napkin, the one that required all gas- and diesel-powered vehicles to get off the roads in order to meet the requirements and targets. Weak management processes—no interdepartmental processes to monitor progress, little progress on assessing risks and developing a provincial adaptation plan, minimal processes to track and report progress, little public reporting on adaptation. That's what the Auditor General says in a very harsh criticism of the previous administration's absence of any climate plan.

Now, Gary Doer was fond of saying that if we don't fix this, then we don't deserve to get re-elected, and I've heard the member say that his party didn't deserve to get re-elected in the last election, and I don't know how many reasons he might need. Gary Doer just had this one, but I would say I certainly agree with both their observations.

Mr. Kinew: Another fascinating answer about credit unions, there.

Who did the Premier (Mr. Pallister) consult with before deciding to phase out the tax credit for credit unions? Was it the same people that he consulted with before deciding to change the notice requirements for newspapers? Was it some other group of people that we're not aware of? Was it, perhaps, the, you know, big banks? I'm just curious to know, who did the Premier consult with before they decided to change the credit union tax credit?

Mr. Pallister: The member spent quite a bit of time in a preamble not that few minutes ago where he attacked our approach to Churchill, and I want to give him some information on that. I'll encourage him to raise any of these questions with the Finance

Minister, he might like, if he likes to focus on the smaller issues. I'm focusing on Churchill because I think it's a bigger issue.

Now, the member should understand a little more about the background here on Churchill. Just days before the last provincial election, OmniTRAX Canada filed a lawsuit against the Province of Manitoba, and they filed that lawsuit because Greg Selinger and Steve Ashton interfered, allegedly, according to OmniTRAX, in the sale of the railway to Mathias Colomb Cree Nation by disclosing confidential information to another First Nation.

That lawsuit from OmniTRAX says that they entered into a non-disclosure agreement with the Province. March 17th of '15 OmniTRAX provided Manitoba with confidential and proprietary financial and operating information, and OmniTRAX alleges that Steve Ashton and Greg Selinger disclosed that information about the company to a consulting firm and also to OCN—Opaskwayak Cree Nation.

Now, that's a lawsuit that's under way, thanks to the previous government's insistence on meddling in an issue, without productive outcomes in mind, that matters greatly to the people of Churchill.

In December, OmniTRAX—of last year—entered into a deal to sell the Port of Churchill and Hudson Bay rail line to a group of First Nations led by Matthias Colomb.

* (15:30)

Now, this follows some years, and I don't have the data right here, but I can get it for the member because I know he'll be interested in this, on subsidized arrangements that were entered into by the previous NDP government to try to appear to be helping, that actually harmed the ability of the people along the line and the community of Churchill to get meaningful federal action on reparation and, in part, reconstruction of the line. Not—and this is all prior to the water damage that we saw, sadly, this past spring.

Now, the amount of the subsidies—we'll give the member detail on that, but they were in the millions of dollars that the provincial government decided they wanted to send to a—I should mention this—multinational and elsewhere-profitable corporation. They decided that they wanted to pay OmniTRAX for, you know, running a railway—that they wanted to subsidize them to do it. And so they entered into those arrangements. Now the member is suggesting somehow that we should continue that arrangement.

I gather that's what he wants us to do, that we should bail out OmniTRAX using taxpayer money or bail out some subsequent operational construct that's going to run a rail line to Churchill.

I would suggest to the member that, constitutionally—and in every other way—the federal government has an obligation. The federal Liberals downloaded this to the private structure back—a number of years ago. They gave it away. If he wants to look for blame, he can look for that downloading. The federal government is responsible for dozens and dozens of ports all over the country of Canada. They could have one more and be responsible for it, and that could be Churchill, but they've decided—the federal government decided some years ago they didn't want to have their hand in Churchill.

Now they're in discussion, they say, and we endeavour to get updates from them periodically on how they're doing with those discussions. But we have made it very, very clear we're committed to the community. We've done that by committing to investments that will total well over half a billion dollars—which, per capita, is the largest support any community in the province would receive on a number of fronts and a number of areas. And so our commitment, which the member called into question in earlier preamble, is very real, very sincere, and very much germane to every aspect of provincial constitutional responsibility. We only ask that the federal government take charge of its areas of responsibility. We'll look to complement that and make sure that, effectively, we work together with them and with the community in every possible way.

But we will not enter into subsidy programs for multinational rail companies, as the previous government did in the faint hope that that would ever result in anything but more subsidy applications.

Mr. Kinew: That's an answer to a question I had asked previously, not an answer to the question about credit unions. I think I had previously asked that question that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) answered a year or two ago. But, you know, it's good that he's getting around to answering the questions—somewhat belatedly.

Again, the question that I'm asking the Premier right now, though—and maybe he's—you know, wants to take his time to pull the information together. Who did he consult with—which credit unions, which industry organizations, which other organizations did he consult with before bringing in the changes to the credit union tax credit?

Mr. Pallister: I've already given the member direction on that, and very clear direction, but let me go back to health care because health care is the No. 1 priority of Canadians, and I believe the No. 1 priority generally of Manitobans.

I freely admit the member's assertion of my concerns about health-care transfers being reduced is quite right. I have real concerns about that reduction in support. So do many others. For example, here are some quotes from other people across the country and around the country. Here's a comment from one, I'm open to any discussion on any angle in terms of the whole ball of wax of transfers—equalization, health, social transfers. I'm open to speaking with the minister on any of that. We didn't have that today. This was very unilateral. This was a comment in respect of the Harper government's decision to reduce transfers for health care. That comment was made by former Manitoba Finance Minister Stan Struthers.

So Stan Struthers spoke out and said he was concerned about reductions to transfers. The new NDP leader doesn't want—doesn't share that position. I understand his reluctance to share a position stated by Stan Struthers currently, on the basis of some other issues, but I would say that the observation that he made was not wrong. It wasn't unilateral decision by the previous federal government, but it was nowhere in the campaign materials of the present federal Liberal government that they were gut—reduce transfers for health care.

The federal fiscal room created by the change in the CHT escalator has transferred the fiscal burden to provinces and raised the fiscal gap of the provinces. This is—that was written in 2013 in the Fiscal Sustainability Report by Kevin Page, who is the officer of the parliamentary budget—parliamentary budget officer.

So—now, the parliamentary budget officer echoes the concerns of Stan Struthers. Another quote: I do not want to stand back quietly. Again, that's Stan Struthers, saying that, but yet the member for Fort Rouge says he does want to stand back quietly. In fact, he's quietly applauding the federal government for reducing support for health care. Appreciate him putting that on the record.

Without notice and without discussion—another quote—the federal government announced a take-it-or-leave-it health care funding plan. That's Unifor, not traditionally a supporter of, you know, Conservative governments. But certainly, they agree

with us that the facts on the health-care accord are dangerous and that the approach that the federal government is taking is dangerous as well.

CUPE is calling on the federal government to negotiate with the provinces and territories on a new health accord with stable and adequate funding including a minimum 6 per cent escalator. That's the CUPE position.

So now the member's opposed to Unifor; he's opposed to CUPE. I mean, he's opposed to basically, you know, every public sector labour organization because they've all said that it's a dangerous situation, it's dangerous for the people of this country and for the people of this province. And so we've taken steps to bend the cost curve, and the member attacks us at every turn. Yet he, at the same time, applauds the federal government for adding to the necessity for us to bend the cost curve. So where is he coming up with the balanced budget? In the \$900,000,000 deficit we inherited, growth in health-care costs, extremely rapid and likely, by all forecasts, to grow even more rapidly. It's a serious problem, and yet I don't hear a single solution from the member. Not one.

So we're undertaking reforms to make the health-care system work better. We're concerned about it. We're concerned that the federal government should resume its partnership to the level it was promised earlier by Paul Martin when he was prime minister, echoed earlier by Prime Minister Trudeau when he was running for office, that they would be partners. And the number that was established was 25 per cent of those costs. We recognized the need, and we've—previous government did not get those costs under control. We've taken steps to do that, and he attacks us for that on the one hand, and on the other hand, he attacks us for complaining to the federal government that they need to resume that 25 per cent partnership.

So he's wanting to have it both ways. He wants to—and I understand opposition; I do. I've been in opposition lots, and I get that he's there to oppose, but he should also present some viable alternatives. Those I haven't heard. I'd like to hear them.

Mr. Kinew: How is the sensitivity training going for the member from Emerson?

Mr. Pallister: On the—just on an earlier question the member had raised about the amount of subsidy the NDP threw at OmniTRAX over the years, it's about \$30 million. And where we're at now is they want

more, and they're coming at us in court because they think that the NDP promises should have amounted to even more than that, and so they're definitely—as a consequence to trying to buy people with taxpayers' money.

* (15:40)

On the workplace harassment issues, I am waiting anxiously for some indication of the problem that came to light recently in respect of the allegations against the former Finance minister in the province of Manitoba, which I expect there's a fair bit of information on in a file which will be handed to me momentarily. And so I will speak to the larger issue of harassment while I anticipate that information, which, I believe, is in that blue binder on someone's lap, currently.

I will say this, that the workplace harassment policies that we've developed and are in the process of developing are designed to prevent a recurrence of things like this tickle incident and incidents over a number of years that occurred under the nose of the NDP caucus, with nothing done about it and of the government—with nothing being done about it. It is obviously a source of discomfort and embarrassment to everyone here and everyone who works in this building because we should have known—and especially the NDP caucus should have known.

We have many new members here, and I'm certainly not impugning their integrity in any way, shape or form. But I would say that any returning member who was in that caucus who was aware of the conduct of the former Finance minister and did nothing about it should, at the very least, be ashamed of themselves. And I know the new leader of the NDP feels the same way and has said so.

It's not something any of us want, to see a workplace where people feel afraid, where people feel not heard. And that is not good. At the very least, that is not good.

I couldn't agree with the member more when he was quoted in a local interview—I believe with CBC—saying the grotesque incidents that have been brought to light in the last few days—oh, no, I'm sorry, this is the former premier, Greg Selinger, who said this. The grotesque incidents that have been brought to light in the last few days happened under my watch as leader of the party in government of the day and, as such, I must take responsibility for our inaction in addressing these incidents. Too many

suffered in silence for too long. I want to apologize so that the voices of these women can be heard.

This apology was made in combination with a statement where the former premier said, as leader of the party at the time, I wish that these incidents of sexual harassment were brought to my attention. Yet it comes to light after, from victims, that it was brought to his attention—was brought to the attention of his chief of staff, as well. And it's alleged—what did the chief of staff say—tell these women to do? Buck up? [*interjection*] Suck it up, or something like that? This is a culture of concealment that has to stop. So I'm very—I'm glad the member raises the issue of counselling. That is—that's one avenue that can be pursued and we are pursuing with the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon)—he raised that in his preamble.

But I would also say that you don't heal this situation by setting up a little committee—and two months ago, the member did that—and then not reporting to anyone about it. It's been two months, and I don't think it's too much to ask what's the results of those inquiries. Are we just going to keep the culture of concealment going here? If there's been an inquiry, if the member has internally done this—I mean, we're interested in working across party lines on this, and I have heard the comments of the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), and I hope they are sincere because this is something that has gone on for too long in silos because party—political party—the previous government tried to protect itself from damage, I would say. I'll interpret that. That was the interpretation, frankly, of some of the female staff who were victimized by the former Finance minister. But we can't repeat this, so I'm asking the member—he set up this committee with a couple of—I know they're good friends of the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine). That's good, but let's get a report. Let's hear what's happening here.

Mr. Kinew: Is the Premier (Mr. Pallister) aware of other issues with the member for Emerson that resulted in him being referred to sensitivity training other than what was reported in the media? Are there other issues there with that member that we're not aware of?

Mr. Pallister: So the member refused to answer my question just now, chose to point his finger at the member for Emerson, who is in the midst of counselling. And yet refuses to address the issue I have just raised with him, which, I think, is perfectly legitimate. I hope he would agree.

I think if he set up this committee of inquiry in his—under his caucus's control and his control with a view to actually addressing issues of harassment, and, if he wants to avoid a repeat of those which occurred—almost exclusively, from the information I have—under the watch of the previous government by an NDP Cabinet minister. And now he's trying to point the finger at the member for Emerson. That's trying to score political points on an issue that should—we should really try not to.

Now, as difficult—it's very difficult, because by raising the allegations against Stan Struthers, I could be accused of being political by mentioning it, but I think it's been pretty well reported that these incidents occurred. They were raised by NDP staffers, for heaven's sakes, and by civil servants as well, and I think we are—should be at the point where we can just talk openly about this. And I would ask the member to take that approach here.

If he is genuinely wanting to see progress on this filed, then we should not repeat the very culture of concealment that resulted in this problem in the first place, that caused women who had been touched inappropriately to be forced to feel alone—for years—to be forced not to speak, to not report, to come to work—or quit—come to work in fear, or quit because they were afraid. And to have nobody in the NDP organization do anything about it is fundamentally, on its face, evidence of a need to change the practices of the past.

Now, we've introduced workplace harassment policies which I believe can strengthen the existing framework of respectful workplace and harassment policies very much. We've instituted a no-wrong-door approach for political staff. I've encouraged all of the political staff on the government side that if they have an—if they experience an incident of harassment, they take it anywhere. They don't have to take it through the party apparatus, they won't have to take it to me as leader, or my chief of staff, or anybody in our political operation.

They should not fear if that person is a Cabinet minister or MLA—they're not more important than them. They are not.

And I have done that, and I have done it sincerely, and I will keep doing it because I believe that these things should be dealt with as best we possibly can, respecting the victim always. And I know the member's concerned about that, sincerely concerned about that, as am I.

But to suggest that having an internal party committee look at this, with a couple of friends of a caucus member in charge of it two months ago—with nothing to report—is to me dangerously derivative of the approach that was taken in the past, and is not going to result—it's not going to result in a healthier workplace.

We have launched government-employee consultations because victims in this case—these cases were not exclusively political staff. There were also civil servants who were affected by this behaviour.

I have told our political staff personally, and through my clerk, we have told all government employees there is no wrong door, and there will be no reprisals, no negative impact whatsoever on your career, whatever your career may be, if you raise these issues.

You need to raise them. We need to shed the light on the situation, not cover it up. It was covered up for far too long. So I encourage the member in his line of questioning. I think everyone in the committee sees where he wants to go, but where I would like to go and I think most Manitobans would want to go is a place where their kids were safe and respected and heard in the workplace. That's where we need to go.

Mr. Kinew: I did something about it. In addition, I shared what we've developed with the Speaker. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has access to that if he wants to discuss it. Let's set up a meeting. Let's discuss it. When there's more to report, I'm sure the Premier will be briefed on it.

The Premier has talked a lot about the arrangement—the agreement that Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation had arrived at last year. He's now called for a meeting.

Will he attend that meeting between Hydro and the MMF?

*(15:50)

Mr. Pallister: I'll address the member's topic in a minute and I'll just finish by saying that we are launching government employee consultations in May. This is for government staff, but again, I would encourage the member that the silos of the past have resulted in problems for staff, political staff and others, that NDP MLAs have admitted that they were aware of the conduct of Mr. Struthers but did not report it. NDP Cabinet ministers have said that they

were made aware by staff who experienced this behaviour and that they did not report it. The victims have said that they made their supervisors aware and that they took it up the pole and that they were told to suck it up and nothing was done. So this is the sad legacy of how these issues were dealt with in the past.

The way, in my estimation, for us to move forward is together. So I appreciate the member's offers to assist, but I would suggest to him that his little investigative study internally is eerily reminiscent of the way the NDP handled these types of issues in the past: swept them somewhere where they wouldn't be seen, made sure that no one else saw it, kept it behind closed doors and made really sure that the political people didn't get hurt as a consequence, which made their staffers believe that they were less important than the elected people were or the reputation of the political organization was. This is not on. This is not right. This is not fair. And I would encourage the member that if there is information that has come to light from this internal study, it should be made public, with deference to, always, the wishes of victims, and if there isn't, why have it?

Go further and say we're engaging an external expert as well to make sure that we review the policies and processes. We have a problem with, I think, excessive confusion and complexity on our harassment policies. We've got different agencies, we've got different rules for constituency assistants in some cases than we do for people who work internally here in the building. We've got different rules for people under the purview of the Speaker than we do for our own staffs. That's got to be thought through, amalgamated, made more understandable and communicable. We have lots of people who move, actually, from one part of government to work in another part of government, that type of thing; shouldn't be a different approach in every arm, sub-arm of government.

So looking at that, looking to review the policies and the processes to simplify procedures so that people have a sense of understanding the rules, identifying gaps in our current approaches, making sure we're following best practices, clarifying expectations of employees too so we—and responsibilities of employees so that we can understand what the issues are that matter to them and identifying actions that can prevent sexual harassment in the first place is obviously really, really critical.

But I think most of all it's just making sure that everyone is clear on the fact that there isn't a wrong way to report harassment and there will not be a reason for fear for people in our political staffs, in our government employ. There will not—there's no reason for fear in reporting harassment, so that every parent in this province knows that their kids, when they work here, are safe. They're safe, they're respected, they're protected, and with that in mind we are also going to be implementing ways to provide statistics and support the knowledge and transparency that's important in this very important issue.

Mr. Kinew: I'm glad that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is using the test that I shared in response to the media around this, that the test really should be until you're comfortable coming to work here, that the work on this topic is not finished, or until you're comfortable sending your kid here, then the work is not finished.

So the Premier says that there's going to be an external expert, or that there already has been—I'm not clear on that—so perhaps he can say whether this external expert has already been retained, or if that's still in the works, and if he can tell us who this external expert is.

Mr. Pallister: It's been tendered. The tender was won by Aikins, a local law firm. The value of the contract was \$50,000.

Mr. Kinew: I just misheard and don't have the benefit of Hansard right now. Can the Premier clarify that's 1-5 or 5-0 on the value?

Mr. Pallister: Five-0. \$50,000. Fifty. Five-0. 50k, thousand.

Mr. Kinew: Still not hearing him, just quite yet. No. So what were the terms? I'm joking. I got it, I got it. I'm messing with you on that one, yes. What was set out in the tender? Like, what were the parameters that, you know, Aikins had to fulfill? What sort of expertise did they bring forward and why were they selected?

Mr. Pallister: I don't have the tender—\$50,000, I should just clarify that—we don't have the tendered document right here, but again, the review will address some of the issues I spoke about earlier. And I didn't want to digress away from the member's earlier preamble of a couple of questions ago, he was asking about Metis Hydro issues. And I'm happy to go there after, but I would just, for review's sake, say, simplifying procedures, identifying gaps in current approaches, ensuring best

practices, improving response pathways so that we support employees, identifying actions that prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, and finally, clarifying the expectations and responsibilities of employees at all levels in promoting safety and in promoting a harassment-free workplace. So these I'd say generally would cover the nature of the tender.

Mr. Kinew: So appreciate the answer there. One of the criticisms that—you know and I hate to, you know, generalize over a whole profession here, but one of the criticisms that are sometimes made of lawyers in these types of situations are that there may be overly procedural, at the expense of sensitivity, or of approaching things in a trauma-informed sort of way.

So I'm a little familiar with the firm that was successful getting the tender here. But I'm wondering if the Premier can talk about what did this firm bring forward to show that they'll be able to work with people in this way, with the necessary sensitivity, with the necessary kind of trauma-informed approach that people nowadays want to see when issues of misconduct are being dealt with.

Mr. Pallister: I have been known to tease my lawyer friends a little bit about them being merchants of misery, but that being said, they—there is a considerable amount of expertise within many legal firms and in many legal minds. But I should clarify that Aikins will be working co-operatively with other initiatives, in conjunction with other initiatives we've undertaken. So, for example, I mentioned earlier the consultations that we're doing with government employees to get insights into their views, their experiences. And the intent there will be that that input, that valuable sharing of experience will also benefit—on the human side, if you will—benefit the consultative work that's being done by the law firm. And the law firm will have expertise on the rules, the workplace rules and so on, obviously, but I think they also will bring with them the various skill sets that will allow them to work with employees, to hear employees' voices as a consequence of this larger process.

* (16:00)

So the Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat's going to be leading those consultations. The Civil Service Commission itself will be involved, and they will also be drawing on support and research from Aikins, who won the tender, and I expect also from facilitators that they'll be using through this process.

So kind of an important thing in no doubt a motivated environment as a consequence of things that have come to light in recent weeks and months.

I can go further if the member wants. I've just—we've just found a document here that might assist to answer his question a little bit better or we can just go to question if he wants. Whatever. *[interjection]*

Scope of work. Just to share the scope of work—was this part of the tendered process? *[interjection]* Right out of the tender? *[interjection]* Okay. So just to—for the member's—in answer to the member's concerns in terms of the scope of work, description of services required. The consultant will undertake a systemic evaluative review of all Manitoba public service policies, procedures and practices related to workplace harassment, including sexual harassment. This will include policies, procedures and practices related to preventing and addressing harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace as well as methods to educate and communicate with employees on the meaning of harassment and its impacts as well as data collection and reporting mechanisms. That's the scope of those—there's more? That's a big scope of work. Oh my gosh. Well, there's a lot more.

Yes. So it's much broader. I did—I talked about a number of things, though, earlier in describing—yes, rather than repeating myself, is there any reason we couldn't make this document available to the Leader of the Opposition? *[interjection]* Sure. Let's make sure we do that then.

Mr. Kinew: Okay. So just to clarify, that document's online now.

Mr. Pallister: Yes, the document's not currently online because it's closed deal, but we can make the document itself available to the member.

Mr. Kinew: So can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) table it?

Mr. Pallister: I'll get it for the member tomorrow. It's kind of messed up here.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, that's fine. All right, thanks.

Okay. So just returning to the other issue, and you know we kind off went off there, but I think it was, you know, an interesting area to discuss and important. So the other issue that the—I had raised was on the issue of Manitoba Hydro, the Metis Federation and the provincial government.

The Premier has requested a meeting. Will he be attending that meeting?

Mr. Pallister: I won't be attending meetings with the Hydro board while the Public Utilities Board is reviewing rates, but I am excited to attend many meetings and certainly already made plans to attend meetings with the board following the decision by the Public Utilities Board on rates. I—my minister will be, as is the case with our government, empowered and co-ordinated to deal with the issues prudent to the discussions between the parties.

Mr. Kinew: So here's something I've been wondering about since, you know, the issue of the Hydro board walking out occurred and, you know, that all kind of flared out. What is the difference—you know, if a Cabinet minister is allowed to meet with the Hydro board, what's the difference with the First Minister personally meeting with the Hydro board?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we have a structure in our government where we trust our ministers. I know the NDP doesn't have a record of doing that, and I know the ministers don't have a record of trusting their leader either. That's quite different in our team. We have a good, strong interrelationship and we respect each other, and our responsibilities are outlined plainly. But there isn't a history of the premier meeting with Hydro boards or Hydro board chairs for a long time in this province, especially during Public Utilities Board hearings.

I've had chairs of past Hydro boards contact me and tell me they had three meetings in a decade with the premier; they don't expect to meet with the premier. And certainly we've been very clear on the issue of the rate application before the—that's now before the PUB, that although our office may well be in contact on a number of issues, we will not be meeting—physically meeting during the process of the PUB hearing. It sends entirely the wrong message about the impartiality, the objectivity, the arm's-length nature of a decision-making process. We're not going to be doing that.

Mr. Kinew: Didn't the Premier change the mandate of the PUB during their deliberations? Why was it okay to change the mandate of the PUB but not to meet with the board of Hydro?

It seems that changing the scope of what the PUB focuses on—directly impacts the PUB, but

talking to the board of Hydro is a separate process that wouldn't interfere with the considerations of that board.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member's mixing his metaphors and confusing vegetables with birds. The fact is that we broadened the mandate of the PUB prior to the deliberation on the rate hearing at the request of the PUB so they could do a better job of looking at the background case begin made by Hydro in its rate application. That's not exactly—or even close to—the same thing as having a meeting during a PUB process.

We empowered the PUB to do their work, and they were restricted, in fact, in the past—according to many—from being able to do their work properly by the previous administration. The previous government decided that, in fact, some of the things the PUB should have been looking at, they couldn't look at until it was too late—same thing with the Clean Environment Commission—didn't allow the Clean Environment Commission to look at the bipole line, didn't allow the Clean Environment Commission to look at Keeyask until it was already half built. This is the way the previous government managed this process, and I don't manage this process this way.

We respect the process the Public Utilities Board has. It's a responsibility that's onerous. I know the member is on record as saying he doesn't care if rates go up at Hydro as long as he gets to blame this government for it, but the fact is that the hydro rates, if they go up at all, will go up because of NDP mismanagement of Hydro that's historic in its enormity. And so we don't want to repeat the mistakes of the past, and we will avoid doing that.

Instead, we'll pursue things that result in better outcomes for Manitobans and try to undo some of the damage the previous administration did. I know the member wasn't here when that happened, but he shouldn't try to get himself tied up too much in repeating the same mistakes that were created by the previous administration. He should learn from them, and we have, and we're not going to repeat them.

Mr. Kinew: So, again, I'd like the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to explain why he can't meet with the board or the chair of the board for Manitoba Hydro. And again, you know, I think the reason why it's a germane question is because the former chair of the board, Sandy Riley, had requested to meet with the Premier.

The former board chair had had a conversation with the minister responsible for Hydro but was told that the questions that Mr. Riley had were above his pay grade. So Mr. Riley figured, well, we can't move forward without, you know, having a sounding board on these issues, and so he, seeing that he was not able to get that sort of, you know, direction from the Crown Services Minister, endeavoured to take it to the First Minister.

However, we've also learned since that the board chair was not able to get a meeting with the Premier himself. So why is it that the minister responsible for Hydro could meet with the board chair, but at the same time, the First Minister, you know, within the same window, was not able to sit down and have a conversation with the chair or with the rest of the board for Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Pallister: Asked and answered.

Mr. Kinew: No, the Premier has not answered the question.

Again, the question is why, if it's okay for a minister in a situation where it is clear that the appropriate authority has not been delegated by the Premier to the minister—why, in a situation in the same window of time, where a Cabinet minister is meeting with the Premier, that the Premier himself cannot sit down with the board for Hydro?

* (16:10)

Mr. Pallister: It was asked and answered, but I'll repeat it and maybe the member will get it this time.

It's not appropriate because I oversee all of my ministers. One minister's in charge of Hydro, so he meets with Hydro. Another minister's in charge of the PUB, so he can meet with the PUB. But I'm in charge of both, and if I take in any respect—and I do have great respect for the work of both—then I won't interfere in a process which involves a rate application because that would create a totally wrong impression of how we respect both agencies.

Now, the member's predecessors did not respect those agencies, and this is what I mean when I say he needs to demonstrate that he understands the mistakes of the past. He's asking me to repeat the mistakes of the past, now. I won't repeat the mistakes of the past. The fact is—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

A formal vote has been requested in another section of the Committee of Supply. I am therefore recessing this section of the Committee of Supply in order for the members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

HEALTH, SENIORS AND ACTIVE LIVING

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply will now resume the consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living. At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

Could the minister of—please introduce his staff.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Returning today is Mr. Réal Cloutier, Ms. Karen Herd and Mr. Dan Skwarchuk. I won't give you their titles because they're long and lengthy and important, but you can look back on Hansard if you want to see them.

Mr. Chairperson: Could the critic introduce his staff while he's coming into the Chamber?

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Looks like I'll be flying solo. Oh, no, just in time delivery. Emily Coutts has returned to the Chamber.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. As previously agreed, questioning for the department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Swan: Yes, does the minister have anything from last day he wants to put on the record before we get going today?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, there's a few things I'd like to put on the record, starting off with how much I'm enjoying the Estimates process, and I want to thank the member for Minto for making this a very enjoyable and productive Estimates session.

Also, he asked some questions yesterday about family doctors. In 2017-18, the department was able to match 97.4 per cent of all who registered, regardless of the length of wait, with a family doctor finder—or, with Family Doctor Finder to a family physician or a nurse practitioner. They were also able to match over 82 per cent of the registrants within

30 days in '17-18. And in '16-17, the matching rate was slightly higher than 86 per cent.

The marginal difference is due to increases in a small handful of rural communities with low primary-care capacity between these times. Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living, Shared Health and the RHAs are actively working on these communities currently to stabilize services.

Since launching the Family Doctor Finder in 2013, officials and those working in the system have helped to match over 91,000 patients. In 2017 alone, they matched 28,000 patients.

So I think yesterday I also said that the Clerk's office was responsible for monitoring the answering of these questions. I am advised and corrected, as I often am by the Clerk's office, that's not actually true. So we, I guess—suppose, monitor the answering of questions and to make sure that any questions that are outstanding are responded to by the member. But they are very diligent and very helpful in providing a list of those things where there's been an undertaking, and we then take responsibility for answering those questions.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister.

And today, I think we'll try and deal with a lot of issues that touch directly on the relationship with Manitoba Health and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and of course, people who count on health care in Manitoba.

But before I do that, I just—I want to ask a couple of questions just because it's something which seems to have found its way back into the speaking notes of the minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister). And it deals with the report that the minister received back on February 1, 2017, from Health Intelligence Inc. and associates. I know we've heard the minister and the Premier speak a lot about this report.

On page 12 of the report, the writer says the contextual basis of the scope includes, but is not limited to, the following—and then enumerates a number of things which would not be surprising—health data, other issues. There are—the first two points, though, that are listed are: No. 1, the strategic direction of the government of Manitoba; and No. 2, economic and fiscal realities in Manitoba, with the highest-quality return on the investment of public funds.

I'm presuming that the strategic direction of the government of Canada came from—either directly

or indirectly—from the minister or the Premier or political staff as well as the economic information that formed the contextual basis for this report.

So I would ask the minister to undertake to provide me with the actual information that was provided by the department—directly or indirectly—to Health Intelligence Inc. which was used, then, to generate the report.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll do my best to answer the member's question. I don't—we're not aware of any economic restraints or specific contexts that were provided to Dr. Peachey in the drafting of his report, certainly not when we were in government. He'll know that it was the former government, his former government, that actually hand-picked and contracted with Dr. Peachey. So it may be that the former NDP government provided some sort of information that I don't have, but certainly, our government did not provide any economic constraints or parameters in—for Dr. Peachey in the creation of his report. There was a working group that he had, and I've listed that off previously. The people who were on that group, we don't believe that they provided any fiscal restraints.

You know, this is—if this is leading to the line of questioning that the former Health critic last year went down in terms of interference or trying to provide any specific direction to Dr. Peachey, I'll restate for the record, and it's been confirmed by Dr. Peachey publicly, there was no direction, there was no fiscal restraints put on Dr. Peachey in terms of what he could recommend within his report. That doesn't mean that he himself didn't, you know, as consultants might do, weigh economic parameters or realities, but they would not have been provided or directed from us.

I can assure the member that I was hands-off on Dr. Peachey's report. I didn't—had never heard of Dr. Peachey when I became the Health Minister, and I don't actually think that I had heard of him for some time after I became Health Minister. In fact, I know I certainly didn't meet him until we ran into each other in a hotel. He came and introduced himself to me in the course of one of the federal-provincial-territorial meetings and indicated the work that he was doing, but there were no financial parameters or restraints or any other sort of direction given to Dr. Peachey on a policy or economic basis.

Mr. Swan: Okay, I appreciate that the member doesn't have the report in front of him. There was two parts to what I'd asked. The second, which I

think the minister has answered, is the statement that the contextual basis of the scope includes economic and fiscal realities in Manitoba, with the highest quality return on the investment to public funds. The minister is saying that neither he nor his department or anybody on his behalf provided any information on this following the election in April 2016. So we'll take the minister at his word.

* (15:00)

The first part, though, and the very first item that's listed in the report, for a contextual basis, is strategic direction of the government of Manitoba. The new government was elected in April 2016. The report is dated February 1, 2017.

The question is: What information was given on the Strategic Direction of the Government of Manitoba to the writer of the report?

Mr. Goertzen: I'd like to thank the member for the question. There was no strategic direction given by me as minister—certainly not from the time we became government, or I became minister. I'm not aware if there was direction given by Sharon Blady. I don't know if it predated Erin Selby's time or not—probably not. But, certainly, there was no direction given by me.

There was a steering committee of Health officials, you know, they—I didn't give them any direction, either, that committee. It may be that they, you know, had discussions with Dr. Peachey prior to us becoming into government and after us coming into government just on the regular discussions of health sustainability and costs and cost drivers in the health system which wouldn't have been discussed—unusual discussions or discussions that would not have happened under a previous government as well.

So I want to assure my friend that I neither had any relationship prior to being in government with Dr. Peachey, I was not aware of Dr. Peachey, did not give him any direction in terms of his report, and really didn't know much about his work for the early part of my time as minister.

I knew, at some point, I think after he identified himself to me, that he was doing work within the system, but it was not an early priority in the sense that I wasn't aware of the work that he was undertaking or what the outcome of it would be. I just had some knowledge, largely based on his encounter with me, that he was doing work as a consultant.

Now, that seems—you know, the member might look at that in hindsight and go that seems strange because, obviously, the ultimate report was fairly dramatic in terms of the change in the health-care system. But you'll have to know that there's many consultants that are working at different times in Health and, certainly, the early part of my tenure as Health was really, you know, honestly, about getting bearings, being briefed by the department on the various facets of the department and preparing for the budget, which, you know, which we were mandated to do in relatively short order because of the timing of the election and the lack of such from the government—the outgoing government.

So, you know, while I appreciate Dr. Peachey's work and the magnitude of it, it was not on my radar in the early days of becoming minister, which might not make the member happy. But, on the other hand, it should have given comfort that there was no direction coming from government in terms of what he ultimately recommended.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister, and I don't think I'm unhappy or happy with that answer. I'm just trying to understand some context.

So the minister says that he did not himself give any direction, so I will accept that at his word. But could the minister just make the inquiries within his department, and, if there was any other information provided to Dr. Peachey which provided strategic direction to the government of Manitoba, I would ask the minister to undertake to provide that.

Mr. Goertzen: I think the challenge in terms of trying to determine the parameters of that is, you know, there was a working group for consultations. They involved—I can list off the group, I'm sure that could be provided that, but it included, you know, the—some unions that were involved, and I'm sure that they had many discussions in terms of the context of health in Manitoba, and that's a big part of what Doctor—well, that's essentially what Dr. Peachey was intended to do: was to look at the health-care system in Manitoba and then to try to determine how to better construct it and to better align it.

So I imagine that there were discussions all the time about the health-care system and how it drives Manitoba. I guess what I can assure the member is that there is no—there was no political direction and there was no direction that had, you know, a political overtone, because I didn't even have an awareness of

Dr. Peachey and his work 'til sometime after. I'm happy to list off the people who were involved in the steering committee with him, but there's no way, I don't imagine, that I could try to reconstruct all the conversations that were had prior to us coming into government and after us coming into government. I can only give the member the assurance that there was no political direction on those discussions.

Mr. Swan: And, obviously, the minister can only speak about what happened after the election, April 2016. I'm not talking about specific direction being given and the preparation in the report. What I'm talking about is the statement that the contextual basis of the report is the strategic direction of the government of Manitoba. And I'm just trying to understand how the writer of the report would know what the strategic direction of the government of Manitoba was, if no one in the department or the minister's office told him what that was?

Mr. Goertzen: So the impetus of the report, and I guess, it's reflected in the terms of reference that the previous government would have given Mr. Peachey, was to develop a clinical service of plan to meet the needs of the population of Manitoba. I mean, that I guess, essentially, is the strategic direction of the government, as expressed by the previous government.

* (15:10)

I know that Dr. Peachey, in his transmittal letter from the report, and I'll quote it, said: "Many individuals contributed to the understanding of the issues, challenges and history of the elements under consideration. Their commitment and participation made possible the acquisition and assimilation of validated qualitative and quantitative data. We have benefited substantially from the willingness of diverse stakeholders and clinical working groups who shared their perspectives and insight, and to the support provided by the project management and the oversight in technical committees."

So I think the best that I can offer the member is the direction, I guess, through the terms of reference by—from the previous government, was to develop a clinical services plan to meet the needs of the residents of Manitoba and that Dr. Peachey references the many different groups that brought together historical context and consideration as well as qualitative and quantitative data.

Mr. Swan: Okay. So the minister's put on the record neither he nor anyone in the department, after

April 19, 2016, provided Dr. Peachey with any information on the strategic direction of the government of Manitoba. So the minister's clear on that, so we can move on.

Just with perhaps an introductory question about the balance of the report, Dr. Peachey in his report says it's a planning tool, it's navigational, not prescriptive, but does go on to make a large number of recommendations—in fact, about 20 pages of recommendations.

Is the Department of Health together with, I suppose, support from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and other health authorities, are they tracking the progress on implementing these recommendations?

Mr. Goertzen: So the specific part of what Dr. Peachey was tasked to do by the former NDP government was to develop a clinical services plan, something that had not been done in the province of Manitoba before, to meet the needs of the residents of Manitoba, going forward both in terms of service and sustainability. Dr. Peachey has said both publicly and also in the report and through the transmittal letter that this is not the end of a process, that this is really the beginning of a journey. In fact, to quote him, so that I'm not misquoting him, he says: This plan is the beginning of a journey and not the end.

And, certainly, you know, a large part of the discussion has been around the changes to the clinical services, particularly to acute care in Winnipeg, and those are obviously tracked in terms of what's been done in the RHA but, then, of course, publicly as well because they're very public plans. But really it's Shared Health Services—or, sorry, Shared Health which will be doing the work, then, of putting together the clinical services plans in the different disciplines for the province, and they would then be responsible going forward for working on the implementation of the different recommendations from Dr. Peachey that weren't specifically related to acute care.

Mr. Swan: I mean, I accept the minister's statement that just because a certain action is recommended in this report, it may not be acted upon. And that's reasonable enough.

But the question I have is: Is there one central place where, for the minister or for the department or for the health authorities, there is actually a tracking of all of the recommendations in the report, and what action, if any, is being taken?

Mr. Goertzen: So, I think the expectation will be that Shared Health will be the entity that'll be reporting back to the ministry on updates on the implementation of recommendations, not just with Dr. Peachey's report, but also with the Toews Report for EMS, which was also commissioned by the previous NDP government, that they would be doing the work on developing the clinical services plan, and that on a regular basis they would be—sort of be monitoring those things that are being implemented, recognizing that, as the member said and rightly said, not every recommendation is going to be implemented, I'm sure. There'll be things that, as time goes along, either won't necessarily fit within the clinical plan, or perhaps it's been addressed in a different way.

So, yes, Shared Health Services will, in their work as clinical—developing that clinical plan—will be looking and tracking the progress on a number of different reports not limited to Dr. Peachey's report, and I'm sure we'll be seeking the best advice in terms of what will be moving forward and what won't be.

Mr. Swan: Okay. Well, maybe we can talk about the situation right now. We know that Shared Health has just basically launched. We know that there's some good people that are working in that new—or rebranded entity, I'll call it.

Is there now—right now—any tracking going on? Is there a spreadsheet that sets out what progress is being taken, what has been completed or what will not be undertaken, that we can actually look at to see whether the government is moving ahead with implementation of the recommendations it wishes to follow under this report?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for—the honourable minister.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I don't know that it would, you know, punch it into an Excel spreadsheet in terms of the recommendations and seeing where exactly everything rests, but obviously, those who are tasked with the work of taking the reports from Mr. Toews and from Dr. Peachey and from other reports, KPMG, of course, and other work that's been done in the department, they'll be working in terms of seeing what can be implemented when and what doesn't make sense to implement at a given time. But I—you know, I imagine they will—they won't be punching it into Excel or Access specifically, but we'll be getting, you know, regular updates in terms of the work that they're doing, things that they're moving on, the timeline to move on other things and perhaps

things that they've decided based on clinical expertise not to move forward with.

* (15:20)

Mr. Swan: I don't accept that answer. The minister has used some sections of this report to try to justify rather major disruptions—I'll call them, because we want to keep the discussion going this afternoon—and has relied on the report. Yet, what I'm hearing now is that the minister is not prepared to be open and transparent, to let Manitobans know which recommendations are now completed, which are being acted on. And, in fairness, if there's an explanation which recommendations aren't being carried on, I would point out to the minister that we can then have a lengthy conversation. I can ask the minister about the progress on any one of these recommendations. We could, I suppose, submit an endless series of freedom of information requests to see where things are going, each individual recommendation. But I'm hoping that won't be necessary.

So I'm just wondering if the minister and the—in the interest of openness and transparency, would consider, then, providing some kind of tracking of the recommendations in the two reports that he has put on the record this afternoon.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'm not sure what part of this isn't transparent, in that every change that happens in the health-care system usually admits public interest, either in the Winnipeg media or in the local media where it's happening, and it often plays out over a series of newspaper articles. So, if the member thinks that we're been trying to chain—or trying to hide the clinical changes over the last year and a half, we've been doing a very a poor job of trying to hide them, because, I think, they've probably used up more newspaper ink than virtually any other story in the last 10 years. So there's certainly no effort to hide the changes that are happening in health care. There won't be any efforts to hide any changes that are going to happen in the future.

I mean, but—he's asking whether or not, you know, we have somebody at a spreadsheet, sort of ticking off every box with every recommendation. I mean, there's—there will be a regular report back to me and to others in terms of the progress in implementing Dr. Peachey's recommendations or Reg Toews' recommendations or the KPMG recommendations. There'll be regular requests by the media, I'm sure, in terms of the variety of the

different recommendations that are coming out of those reports and where they're at. The opposition, of course, will do the job that they're both entitled and empowered to do, in terms of asking those questions. Hardly any of this could be possibly—be any more transparent than changes that are happening in the health-care system.

I might argue about whether or not some of the newspaper articles are always the most accurate reporting of things, but that's what politicians do, right. I mean, we reflect on some of the newspaper reports that we might always—not always feel are exactly as we would hope, but, you know, they have an important job to do too. And I think, from my experience with the media, which I have many friends within that industry, I think they do the best job that they can, even though we often have some disagreements related to it. But we will, you know, obviously, be reporting back on progress to the changes that we've made to the health-care system. We'll be open and transparent in terms of those changes.

The member's absolutely free to go through the list of every recommendation. We can have a discussion about every one of them; I'm happy to do that. I'm here at his disposal. I have made no plans until June 4th, and so I more than welcome his questions to do that, here, each and every afternoon, although my officials might not be as excited about it as I am. And that's part of the process.

I'd remind him that, you know, when he was the Attorney General, they stopped tracking the prison system in terms of cases for the prosecutors and how many cases they were doing. And he didn't seem to have an issue with that, when they had a system that properly tracked the number of cases each prosecutor had one year and then the next year, he said they didn't track it anymore and they had nothing to provide. So I'm not sure that he has the cleanest hands when it comes to asking these questions.

But I certainly would say that we are going to continue to publicly discuss transformation of the health-care system. We'll publicly discuss those recommendations that are moving forward. I'm more than welcome to answer questions about any recommendation and whether it's moving forward at this particular time or not moving forward at this particular time. I may not always be able to tell him an exact date that something may happen or may not happen but I'm happy to have that discussion, right up until now, until June 4th, at 5 o'clock.

Mr. Swan: Well, look, there are many Manitobans who are quite right when they say the minister is effectively cherry-picking recommendations that he likes from this report, that maybe will fulfill his mandate to try and cut costs. The report makes very strong comments, saying that if you don't provide services in a number of areas, any gains you may get will be greatly limited, and I think it would be the—it would be in the interests of openness and transparency, which his Premier (Mr. Pallister) continues to talk about, to actually track those things. But the minister's said that that's not what's going to happen, that we'll have to keep relying on whatever information we can find out, sometimes from employees coming forward and telling us changes that they've learned about, patients telling us about things they've learned about, trying to get information on cuts, which the minister can't even answer in his own budget Estimates. It seems like a very poor way for a government, which claims to be all about openness and transparency, to be negotiating its way through a major disruption in our health-care system.

So the minister's made it very clear. He's going to require us and Manitobans to continue to find this out in bits and pieces, and that's exactly what we will do.

I do want to talk about the minister's reasons for shuttering five QuickCare clinics in the city of Winnipeg, which all closed very early in this calendar year. Why did the minister direct this to happen?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I take some objection to the vast majority of the question that was asked related to tracking of recommendations. I mean, again, we will, through Shared Health, be implementing the different recommendations as they see fit, clinically. I'm sure there'll be lots of discussions publicly about it. We'll have the discussion in the House. We'll have the discussion in the media. We can have the discussion in the coffee shops. We can have the discussions in many different places, so it'll be a very public and open, transparent—if the member thinks in some way that I'm trying, again, to hide the transformation of health care, then I've done a very poor job of that as minister because it has been more public than—or been as public as any issue that we've had as a government. And so it's not, I'm sure, a secret to Manitobans, that there's been changes. People can have their opinions on them. I would ask people to sort of look at the fullness of time in terms of the results. But it's a very public process.

Now, in terms of, you know, cherry-picking different recommendations, well, I don't think we ever said that every recommendation would happen at once and that it would drop like a flood out of the sky and everything would happen at one particular time. I might remember—mind the member that the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, there's many recommendations when he was the Attorney General and through the 17 years of the NDP government that didn't move forward. I don't remember him tabling a tracking of those recommendations. Certainly, you know, there'd be public discussions about the different recommendations in that report.

I know about the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, many different recommendations that came forward from that; I don't necessarily recall that there was a daily tracking system. But, of course, there were questions, and the minister of Justice, when he held that role, would've answered those questions; whether they're to our satisfaction or not, he would've commented on them, and that's as it should be. But he certainly didn't—or didn't implement all of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry recommendations at once when they came into government in 1999, and they certainly didn't implement all of the recommendations under the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. The family ministers at the time for the NDP didn't drop all of those recommendations into effect at once.

There's often, and I would say, almost always a staging when it comes to recommendations in any given report. So if the member's concerned, you know, that there's a quote, unquote, cherry-picking, well, I mean, you start at different places in almost any given report. There's very few reports that I can recall where every recommendation was implemented at once, unless there was perhaps only one or two recommendations in a report. But that wasn't the case with Dr. Peachey's report, nor have I ever heard him publicly or privately suggest that it was ever his expectation that every recommendation would be acted upon in one fell swoop by the government.

(15:30)

Mr. Swan: Yes, I'd ask the minister why he chose to shutter five QuickCare clinics in the city of Winnipeg? Why did that happen?

Mr. Goertzen: Well I take some exception with the characterization that the member has put forward. Certainly, the member will know that the QuickCare clinics were often closed. In fact, some members of the public referred to them as the quick close clinics,

which isn't easy to say 10 times, but there's lots of frustration when people would come to a clinic and it wouldn't be open.

In some ways that mirrors, unfortunately, what has happened in rural Manitoba for many years, where there just wasn't a certainty whether a certain facility would be open, and that was clearly the case when it came to the QuickCare clinics in Manitoba. You just didn't know whether or not they would be open at any given time, and so that was definitely a challenge.

My concern about the characterization that the member has put forward, as it relates to the QuickCare clinics, he indicates that those resources are no longer available. In fact, those resources have been redeployed into the ACCESS centres, into the Walk-In Connected Care clinics.

There were ACCESS centres that had excessive amount of space that was available because there just was a lot of extra space in some of the ACCESS centres, and so it made sense to redeploy those resources from the QuickCare clinics into the ACCESS centres, so the Walk-In Connected Care clinics.

And so it's—I think it's an important part of the service. I think there's some good connectivity—which is probably why they're called what they are—to have them in the ACCESS centres, and so there can be close to other resources as well. I'm pleased that I think some of the former locations of the ACCESS centres have been—not all of them, but some—have been used for primary care physicians. So that's good in terms of community care, but it made good sense to relocate some of those resources into the ACCESS centres.

I would, if I had the moment, Mr. Chairperson, to reflect upon some of the extensive leases that were signed with those QuickCare clinics by the former NDP government, some of them going multiple, multiple years. And to tie up—I think—resources of the health care system, to not provide future flexibility as a result of some of those leases, I think was both poor planning by the former NDP government.

And really, I want to give a lot of credit to the regional—Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the officials there and the board, for working really hard to get sub-leases on those locations, some of which we've—were holding for—I think upwards of 20 years, leases that were assigned. And so they've done a really good job of finding sub-leases that make the

taxpayers whole or close to whole, and allow for other services to be provided there, while the resources are going into the ACCESS centre.

So I'm pleased to see that the resources are still within the system, probably better placed within the system, and that we've been able to ensure that the liability of taxpayers on those leases—very extensive leases—was minimized by the work of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I would like to request a recess. I would like to invite the minister up to room 334 to meet with the walkers as per his answer there during my question period.

Mr. Chairperson: Can you also identify how long of a recess you're requesting, the member from Kewatinook?

Ms. Klassen: Five minutes.

Mr. Chairperson: Five minutes. Sure.

Is it leave for the member—for the critic and minister to have leave to have recess for five minutes?

Mr. Goertzen: We can make it 10 minutes, because I'm not in as good a shape as I used to be and it might take me five minutes to get up and down the stairs, so—

Mr. Chairperson: Is it leave to have—for the committee to have 10-minute leave—recess?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: It's been denied by the member—*[interjection]* No. Okay. It's been denied.

The questions will continue.

The honourable member for Kewatinook.

Ms. Klassen: I humbly request the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher). These people have walked 1,100 kilometres, and they are from a remote First Nation and it means so much for me if you would let the minister meet with my people.

Mr. Chairperson: I just want to inform the committee that it's not a debate; it's a leave request. So do we have—yes, I just want it to be informed that it should be a leave requested. It's not a debate, so, if we'd want to put that forward again before the committee, you're more than welcome to.

The honourable member for Kewatinook.

Ms. Klassen: I humbly request for a five-minute–a 10-minute recess.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave to have a 10-minute recess in the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: I just want to say–

Mr. Chairperson: No, there's no saying. It's either yes or no.

I guess there—it says everybody's agreed, so we have 10-minute recess.

The committee recessed at 3:37 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:47 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: The Committee of Supply will now resume consideration for the Estimates for the Department of Health and Seniors and Active Living, and we'll continue again, and we'll have the honourable member for Minto.

Mr. Swan: One of the first issues that the minister raised in his explanation of why all the QuickCare clinics—well, five QuickCare clinics in Winnipeg were closed—was staffing. Of course, unlike some clinics where it's doctors, the goal of QuickCare clinics was to have nurse practitioners and nurses. I met a lot of nurse practitioners who actually were very excited about that initiative.

Why didn't the government just staff the QuickCare clinics properly and keep them open?

Mr. Goertzen: I imagine it's the same challenges that existed under the former NDP—I mean, I don't want to leave the—the former NDP government. I know the NDP's still around in the fashion that it is.

The—I don't want to leave the impression that it was only the last two years that QuickCare clinics weren't open. I mean, there was many years when our former Health critic, the esteemed Speaker of this Assembly now, would raise the issue of QuickCare clinics not being open in Winnipeg under the NDP, so I imagine it's many of the same challenges when it came to staffing that existed in the first year or so when we were in government before we made the decision to repurpose those resources into the ACCESS centres existed under the former government.

Mr. Swan: Just to make it clear, the minister thought his government would rise up to the challenge by giving up and closing the QuickCare clinics.

Mr. Goertzen: Oh, far from it. I think we rose up to the challenge by looking and saying, how could those resources be better utilized in a more consistent fashion for Manitobans. And, by repurposing the resources into ACCESS centres through the new Connected Care clinics, it provides predictability; it provides different services within the ACCESS centres; it provides predictability for Manitobans; and it uses existing space.

I don't want to underestimate the challenge that was left with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to determine how to repurpose those leases that the former NDP government allowed to be signed for multiple, multiple years. I think some of them were 20-year leases on a QuickCare clinic that wasn't working particularly well.

* (15:50)

And I again credit the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority for being able to, on many of those leases, find subleases, some of which would have then had health purposes as well, and to ensure that the taxpayers were made whole when it came to those subleases and still be able to repurpose those resources into the ACCESS centre.

And so, far from not being able to rise up to the challenge, and I won't take credit for this; I'll give credit to the officials within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority for being able to identify how those resources could be better deployed in a place that was already existing within the footprint of Health, and in a way that wouldn't put taxpayers at jeopardy because of the leases that they were leaving out of. So I think that those officials rose to the challenge and did so in an exemplary way.

Mr. Swan: The minister has to agree there is only a challenge with the leases for the QuickCare clinics because the government shut them down.

Mr. Goertzen: No; there's a challenge with the leases because the former government signed ridiculous leases for foolish lengths of time, and so that was a particular challenge because it would have left a great amount of jeopardy for taxpayers.

Now and again the challenges with keeping those QuickCare clinics staffed and open existed long before we came in the—to government. The member can research Hansard as much as I can. He

will have seen the former Health critic from the Progressive Conservatives raise, on countless occasions, the fact that the clinics weren't open in many cases.

And so this was a way to ensure that the resources were still being utilized and Manitobans were able to get not just equal service but I would argue, better service, more predictable service, in the current and existing footprint of Health, utilizing the ACCESS centres which had lots of space in them in many cases.

Mr. Swan: Now, in one of his responses, the minister said this was the choice of the regional health authority. In fact, it was Cabinet that approved the closure of the QuickCare clinics, wasn't it?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, it was a recommendation from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, but yes, we're the government, and so absolutely it was authorized by the government. I don't shy away from that. I think that the recommendation to close some of the QuickCare clinics made sense.

There was frustration, I think, within officials within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the ability to keep those facilities open and properly staffed, but if the member thinks I'm trying to shirk responsibility for the closure of the QuickCare clinics and putting those resources and—you know, let's not just talk about closures; I'll take responsibility for the closure of the QuickCare clinics, but I will also note that we opened the Connected Care clinics in the ACCESS centres which he doesn't want to acknowledge.

But I—this is no effort for me as a minister to try to download responsibility to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, regardless of the fact that the recommendation would have come. Ultimately we gave it approval because it made sense and so I give full accolades to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in terms of their transition of those QuickCare clinics and putting the resources into the ACCESS centres, and I'll take full responsibility for anything the member doesn't like.

Mr. Swan: I don't expect the minister will have this handy, but I would like him to undertake to let me know with the closure of the five QuickCare clinics, how many nurse practitioners were deleted and how many of those nurse practitioners were able to find other employment within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority?

Mr. Goertzen: My understanding is that the majority of nurse practitioners would have been offered employment within the system, in particular, within the new walk-connected—Walk-In Connected Care clinics in the ACCESS centres, in-keeping with the redeployment of the resources into those facilities.

You know, we can endeavour to try to track all of them who would've previously been in the five QuickCare clinics, but it becomes difficult sometimes, and I'll put it on the record, for the member and I, and I've sort of learned this in dealing with the different contracts and the union contracts, is that sometimes individuals choose to take a lay-off status even though they take another job elsewhere, either inside or outside of the system, so that they can come back to that particular position later on if they choose to.

So I think this became an issue in dealing with the nurses' union in trying to determine the number of nurses who were on lay-off status from the Victoria hospital. My recollection is that a number had obtained employment at St. Boniface, but they remained on lay-off status at the Vic, so they showed up as lay-off status, but they did that because they wanted to maintain status at the Victoria hospital, if there were desirable positions for them, to be re-employed. So it just becomes confusing with the terminology in that there are some who will appear to be on lay-off status, even though they might be working in the system or in the health-care system generally.

So I put that as a cautionary note for the member, but certainly we will endeavour to provide him with the information on where those nurse practitioners who were in the QuickCare clinics, where they existed and employment status.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that. I mean, it may well be that the majority of nurse practitioners were offered or found another position, but if you're not one of the majority and you're one of the minority who finds yourself out of a job in this city, it is a challenge.

Could I also get the minister to then provide me through the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, how many nurse practitioners are employed by the regional health authority at the present time?

Mr. Goertzen: Sure. I imagine we can find that data. I don't want to minimize the issue of an individual who is laid-off, either working but on a lay-off status

from a different facility, I would never minimize that for one individual. But I do think that scale and context can sometimes be important, because I know in the significant changes in phase 1 of the reform—transforming our health-care system, there were, of course, the member will know, multiple hundreds of deletion notices that needed to be issued because of the way the contract is structured. But at my last recollection, from a briefing, there were, I think, 31 or 32 nurses who were on a lay-off status. That doesn't mean they may not have been employed elsewhere, but they were on a lay-off status, and there was, I think, 90 available positions for nurses within the health-care system.

So, you know, remembering that we have tens of thousands of employees employed in health in the province. And so sometimes scale is important and I think that, not to minimize any of the 30, and we certainly have continued to work to help those individuals where they are looking for employment. But I say that because I think it shows the monumental effort that was made by those working in the system to ensure that those who desired employment in the health-care system were able to find employment in the health-care systems.

Now, to 'cific' on the question that the member asked, I'm advised from officials that there are 71 nurse practitioners that are employed in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

Mr. Swan: And I thank the minister for that answer. Scale is important, which is why many of us were very surprised when the government chose to make a change to coverage provided for people suffering from sleep apnea by now requiring a co-pay for CPAP machines and payment for supplies.

I understand about 16,000 Manitobans are impacted by this. Is that about the right number?

*(16:00)

Mr. Goertzen: No, I mean, it's important. It's an important question and, certainly, the change as it relates to sleep apnea—I know any change in the health-care system is—it can be difficult and, certainly, causes lots of attention, as it should, Mr. Chairperson.

I think if the member would look across Canada, he would still find that Manitoba maintains one of the most, if not the most, generous program when it comes to those who are dealing with sleep apnea.

You know, I've heard of a few people who may have said to me, well, you know, should we then go to British Columbia because we have sleep apnea. Well, if you did, you'd be paying for the entire cost of your machine, because the \$2,000 cost, I believe, in sleep apnea is entirely—have to be funded by the individual. If you decided to pack up and move to Quebec, you'd be in a much worse situation. If you decided to move to any of the Maritime provinces or to Alberta, you'd be in a worse situation.

I mean, we have one of the most generous programs in Canada, and so I think Manitobans should feel good about that and know that the program, as it exists today, is a sustainable program and also one of the most generous in Canada.

It is my understanding that the number that the member quoted is in the ballpark, but I think it's actually 18,000.

Mr. Swan: Okay. I thank the minister for that clarification, and maybe if the minister could then undertake to provide the exact number of Manitobans who've been impacted that would be helpful.

Mr. Goertzen: So as not to keep the member in suspense, it was 16,500 as of March 2017. As of January 2018, it's 18,000. Now, that seems a surprise to me that it's that rounded of a number, but we can endeavour to find the exact number. But I think that—I think it would be either slightly below or slightly above 18,000.

Mr. Swan: I thank the minister for that, and to summarize the nature of that change, it means that every time someone needs to replace their CPAP machines, which I understand have a lifespan of about five years, they will then have to pay \$500 out of their own pocket. I also understand from comments that were put on the record by officials from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, that the cost of the various supplies is about \$350 per year.

So how much money does the minister actually expect will be saved by this change to the coverage for people with sleep apnea?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and the other figures I think that are important to put on the record are the actual costs of the machines themselves, which I think can be about \$2,000, which means that if you are a resident of 'Bitish Columbia', NDP British Columbia or Alberta—British Columbia, Alberta are at least right now—but, you never know, the winds of

change are blowing—if you are a resident in Quebec, if you're a resident in any of the Maritime provinces, you are paying that \$2,000 entirely for the machine.

And so we maintain one of the most generous programs in the entire country, and let's not forget that sustainability is an—specifically an issue when it comes to the program. There are more people who are being diagnosed with sleep apnea, 'jost'—not just in Manitoba but in every province in Canada, and the ability to maintain one of the most generous programs in Canada, I think, is important and it gives, I think, some assurance to those Manitobans that the program is in a more sustainable state than it was before and that those Manitobans who are diagnosed with sleep apnea are being supported significantly by taxpayers in the province to help them with that.

Officials would indicate to me that the savings from the change—which still keeps us as one of the most generous programs in all of Canada—would be \$3.4 million annually.

Mr. Swan: Yes, well I know that the minister might want to make a comparison across provincial boundaries. The fact is, someone who needs to replace their CPAP machine after—I believe it's April 23rd of this month—is going to be spending \$500 plus another \$350 out of pocket that they didn't have to pay before, and that's disappointing.

At the time that this change was made, there was a suggestion that there would be some allowance made from people with extreme financial hardship. Can the minister put on the record then what the process is for someone who is going to face hardship by reason of this cut to try and get some or all of these costs waived by the health authority or by the government?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, the member started off with commentary that I don't want to dismiss. I recognize that any change is difficult, and I recognize that any change can be a challenge.

But I don't think, you know, the comparisons across borders are not valid. I mean, I've—I heard the former Health critic, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), at one point say that we should look to Quebec and do what Quebec is doing when it comes to health care. That—of course, what Quebec is doing when it comes to health care is about 33 per cent privatization within their system. But he was certainly advocating for us to look at Quebec and to move to a more private model.

I heard the—one of the Liberal members ask questions about the Pharmacare program, and relate it to Ontario, and said we should be looking at Ontario. They, of course, didn't reference the fact that doctors in Ontario held a news conference about a week ago and said that health care had never been in a worse state than it was in Ontario—than it was at that moment under the provincial Liberal government.

So members of this House often look across borders, and so I don't think it's unreasonable for us to look and say we have one of the most generous programs when it comes to sleep apnea and assisting those who are dealing with sleep apnea. Does that mean that it's an easy change for people? It isn't an easy change for people, but it does have to be a sustainable system. You know, one could imagine—given the pressures on that particular program—what it might have looked like in five years from now and the changes that might have—had been made then if these steps weren't taken now.

So the steps to move to a sustainable system now, I think, will benefit those who are dealing with sleep apnea in the future. And certainly the taxpayers of Manitoba continue to be a significant supporter—75 per cent, when it comes to the actual sleep apnea machine for those of their fellow citizens who are dealing with sleep apnea. And I think that that's something we should not lose in the debate.

My understanding when it comes to the issue of support for those who are on lower income is that EIA will cover the costs of the equipment for sleep apnea, I'm advised from officials. And so a great number of those who are dealing with a low-income scenario will be covered through EIA. I also know that officials have indicated that the details in terms of others who wouldn't be covered by EIA, but who would still find themselves in economic hardship—that the details of those plans will be released shortly, certainly before the changes officially take place.

* (16:10)

But the important part being the province of Manitoba still has one of the most generous sleep apnea programs in Canada. Those who are on EIA and dealing with difficult financial circumstances will find themselves covered. And for those who are not on EIA but still have the financial hardship when it comes to the change, there'll be details of a program being released relatively shortly.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we ask any questions, the member for river–Fort Richmond.

Report

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254): Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 254 considering the Estimates of the Department of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) moved the following motion: that line item 10.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

Mr. Chairperson, this motion was defeated on a voice vote. Subsequently, two members requested that a counted vote be taken on this matter.

Mr. Chairperson: A vote has been—a vote—recorded vote. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Chairperson: In the section of Committee of Supply meeting in room 254, considering the Estimates for Growth, Enterprise and Trade, the honourable member for Flin Flon moved: that in

line 10.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

The motion was defeated in a voice vote, and, subsequent, two members requested a recorded vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Okay, move—the member from Flin Flon moved: that line 10—item 10.1—okay, that line item 10.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 12, Nays 36.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being past 5—the hour being 5, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

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