

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

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Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
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	PC
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	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
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	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 23, 2016

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.***Madam Speaker:** Please be seated.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 203—The Legal Profession Amendment Act  
(Queen's Counsel Appointments)****Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** It gives me great pleasure to introduce—**Madam Speaker:** The member has to move it through the appropriate protocol.**Mr. Fletcher:** I move, with—seconded by the member from Brandon West, an amendment to the Bill 203—an amendment to The Legal Profession Act. This bill will—**Madam Speaker:** Order.**Mr. Fletcher:** So much red tape. Okay. Thank you.

I'd like to move, seconded by the member from Brandon West, The Legal Profession Amendment Act—that Bill 203, The Legal Profession Amendment Act (Queen's Counsel Appointments), be read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Fletcher:** This bill brings back a long tradition in Canada of the Queen's Counsel designation QC to recognize outstanding achievements to the community and to our country by the legal profession. The gist is, a person would need to provide outstanding contributions to society, serve as a lawyer for at least 10 years and there's a limit of the number of appointments that can be made per year.

Madam Speaker, this will bring us in line with majority of provinces in Manitoba and has very strong support from the Manitoba Bar Association and enthusiastic comments from the Law Society of Manitoba.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports?

## TABLING OF REPORTS

**Madam Speaker:** In accordance with section 42 of The Ombudsman Act, and subsection 26(1) of The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, and subsection 58(1) of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and subsection 37(1) of the personal health act, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Manitoba Ombudsman for the year ended December 31st, 2015.

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Civil Service Superannuation Board for 2015.

**Madam Speaker:** Ministerial statements?

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**Lundar Agricultural Fair**

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake):** It gives me great pleasure today, Madam Speaker, to address the House and speak of an event that I attended a few weeks ago, the annual event, the Lundar Agriculture Fair.

It's a great community event that brings residents from all over the Interlake. I witnessed the 4-H calf sale, participated in the parade and many other spectacular events, including the vintage tractor pull.

The 64th year of tradition has had many a great Manitoban engaged in the festivities. These rural fairs are the cornerstone of bringing communities together. This fair in particular has roots all the way from 1917 and has gone on and off for almost a century.

A special thanks to the directors of the Agriculture Society in Lundar: President Mike Kostyshyn, Vice-president Ken Sweetland, Secretary-treasurer Cynthia Wirgau and Sandra Pott.

My thanks also extend to all the volunteers and organizers, while making the point not to forget everybody who attended.

Madam Speaker, this fair has deep roots within the Interlake. This is an iconic event that has spanned through two great wars and always come back to foster a strong community.

I am proud of my constituency and constituents and always had a great time when I attend.

There is also a one-day music festival coming up, the Oak Point Music Festival, featuring Country Pride, Sacred Stone, square dancing and many, many more activities. I hope to see everyone there.

### **General Wolfe Wolfpack**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** They are tough, quick and dedicated. They worked all-hard all season toward a goal. And, Madam Speaker, I am West End proud to tell you that this season the senior boys' basketball team at General Wolfe School won the Junior High Invitational Tournament for the first time in the school's history.

The Wolfpack surprised many in the tournament, as they entered as the sixth seed. They had to beat three suburban schools to claim the title. After a close win over the Arthur Leach Lancers, the Wolfpack went on to defeat the Kildonan East Reivers by a narrow margin of only three points to qualify for the tournament final.

In the final, the Wolfpack faced the Garden City Gophers, the top-ranked team in the tournament, in front of a supportive West End crowd. In their two previous games, the Gophers had dominated their opponents, beating them each by over 20 points. Yet the Gophers were no match for the Wolfpack's defensive discipline and were unable to stop wily point guard Montey Everd and six-foot-two centre post Isaiah Letander.

The Wolfpack brought the championship trophy home to Ellice Avenue, winning by a score of 53 to 43. Long-serving head coach Victor Guerra and assistant coach Jeff Proskan have done an incredible job this season. In typical West End fashion, though, they pass on all the credit to the team for their work ethic and cohesiveness.

My West End neighbours and I celebrate the results of the teamwork and dedication of the players, coaches, staff and parents.

I'm excited to see what the future brings as these fine young men move on to attend high school this September.

Both the DMCI and Tec Voc basketball programs are eagerly awaiting their arrival as we look for more championships for Winnipeg's West End.

Madam Speaker, I ask this House for leave to have the names of the players and coaches of the General Wolf Wolfpack recorded permanently in Hansard.

Thank you.

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

*Kevin Ly, Isaiah Letander, Kenniston Roxas, Montey Everd, Jordan Agustin, Justin Ducusin, Josh Teano, Aaron Varila, Ahron Teodocio, Rhandel Banzon, Tommy Tran, Michael Sancio, Victor Guerra (head coach), Jeff Proskan (assistant coach)*

### **Parental Rights and Responsibilities in Education**

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** Madam Speaker, it's graduation season. Next week, thousands of grade 12 students in Manitoba, including my oldest son Mike, will complete their studies and celebrate their achievements.

I'm grateful to all the teachers, coaches and school administrators who have invested their time and energy in these students.

The very same week, my wife, who is also a teacher, is due to give birth to our youngest child. So in one instance, I'll be spanning a wide spectrum of parenting—of the parenting journey, from birth to high school graduation.

So I find myself asking, what really is our mandate as parents and as educators? Is it to provide not just food, shelter and clothing but opportunities and experiences? Or is it to protect our children from harsh realities like bullying and discrimination or to shelter them from the effects of pornography, alcohol and drugs?

And there's no doubt that these are important. But the parents and educators who hit closest to the mark are those who understand that their job is to prepare our children for adult life, to prepare them to deal with harsh realities.

I want my daughter to know how to stand up to a bully. I want my son to treat the women and girls in his life with respect. And I want my children to understand the consequences of using drugs and alcohol.

It's important, too, that our public and independent schools realize that their role is to help the parents. It's not just a parent's right to choose the type of education that their children has, but it's their responsibility.

\* (13:40)

Now, some have said that our schools should be places where the beliefs and cultural identity of the parents are deemed irrelevant, or worse, something to be resisted or corrected. But such thinking is wrong. My indigenous colleagues surely remember Justice Sinclair saying how wrong it is to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next.

So this season, as we witness many graduations with young people entering a new stage of life filled with hope and optimism for the future, let's never forget that these children are our future, and it was our job to prepare them as best we could to meet these challenges, to stand up for justice, to show kindness and compassion and to carry on the traditions, beliefs—

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

#### **Intern Appreciation**

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Madam Speaker, today I rise to show appreciation for the interns on both sides of this House. Their last day with their caucuses is tomorrow and what a quick 10 months it has been. It seems like just yesterday the interns were first introduced to our caucuses. They have now become integral parts of our teams.

This year's interns have had one of the most unique experiences in years: two throne speeches, one budget, one economic fiscal update, study trips to Ottawa and Toronto along with weekly seminars with some of Manitoba and Canada's most prominent leaders and, of course, one of the most historic election wins in our province. The election outcome gave the interns a look at how both opposition and government function. As I'm sure members opposite are now noticing, interns can play a large role when staff is a little bit smaller.

Over the years, the program has seen its fair share of outstanding young minds, this year being no exception. The Minister of Health, the Clerk of the Assembly, various staffers in the building and, of course, Madam Speaker, myself, were all interns in the past. And while I could wax eloquently about when I was an intern and had to walk to work uphill both ways, I won't, but I can attest to the valuable work that they've—been done by the interns over the years and the significant role they play within our respective caucuses.

So to Lane, Tara and Meagan, thank you for all the work you have done over the last 10 months. Whether it was essential opposition research, helping us transition into government or other duties as assigned, your work did not go unnoticed. You will not be forgotten and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours. Hopefully your experience in the Legislature has inspired you and we will see you in this building representing Manitoba, sharing your own stories of when I was an intern.

Thank you.

#### **First Nations Communities**

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** I am from St. Theresa Point First Nation. I am an Island Laker. Island Lake is comprised of four reserves: St. Theresa Point, Garden Hill, Red Sucker Lake and Wasagamack. We are over 13,000 strong.

We originate from the old post trade settlement; we were once one group of people. It is when the differing missionaries came to the old post that we began to divide into the four communities. There still exists magnificence in my people's cultural beliefs and our value systems. I am living proof of that. And it is through these values that we are a collective group still. We laugh, love, live and play together.

If you have ever been to the area of 10,000 lakes in Ontario, that is what my home looks like. It is a vast unspoiled wilderness, and it is breathtaking. Our traplines and our treaties cover the entire area.

We still have elders who fondly talk about the time before currency existed there. They talk about how gratifying it was to wake at dawn, work all day and how restful sleep came at dusk. It is still like that on our traplines. We work to live and we live off our lands. If you can imagine all your favourite camping spots, that's what trapline life is like, without amenities and stores.

This year, St. Theresa is proud to boast that it will have over 100 graduates from secondary and post-secondary schools alike.

As we break into summer, I encourage all members here to visit a First Nation community. This one small gesture is what you can do to close the gap these communities feel and have felt since contact.

My own community holds the world's Guinness Book of Records for bannock and we celebrate our annual Bannock Festival on—starting June 29th to July 3rd. And you are all invited. Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, we have some guests here with us today. In the loge to my right is the former member from Gimli, Ed Helwer, and we'd like to welcome you here.

And also in the public gallery is Candice Bergen, MP for Portage-Lisgar, and the guest for the honourable member for Portage.

\* \* \*

And, also, because it is the last day for a number of our pages, I just want to tell you a little bit about each of them, and then we can wish them all a fond farewell and good luck.

The first of the pages I would like to mention is Ceanray Harris-Read, who is a grade 12 student at Churchill High. Her average is 95. Ceanray hopes to study political science at the University of Ottawa in the fall. She aspires to become a human rights lawyer. She is head of her school peace, and this group promotes good mental health for high school students. She is active in the domain of health advocacy and sits on the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre youth advisory board. Ceanray is a member of cabinet for the Franco-Manitoba Youth Parliament. She would someday like to be elected to the Manitoba Legislature.

Megha Kaushal, and Megha will graduate grade 12 on the 26th of June with an average of 97. In July she will take a prerequisite course, and then in the fall attend the University of Manitoba in the faculty of pharmacy. Her outside interests are handball and curling. Megha is involved in the grad committee and a youth philanthropy group that gets grant money, and then studies various social groups decides who to support. Megha hopes to stay in Manitoba.

And Julia Antonyshyn, Julia has been a student of the collegiate at the University of Winnipeg and graduated in April from grade 12 with an average of 97. Julia is interested in pursuing a career in environmental studies and hopes to combine this with a career in politics. Her outside interests are softball, playing the guitar, and she is involved with United Church of Canada. Julia really enjoyed her year as a page here and hopes one day to be a member of the Assembly.

And to all our pages, we want to wish you the very best. This is an incredible experience for you, a

very unique one, and all of us wish you all the best in your future.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Canada Pension Plan Reform Government Position

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It is no wonder that when Manitobans think of the Premier and this government, the first thing that comes to mind is a hidden agenda. Nothing shows this more than his response to the new national Canada Pension Plan agreement reached earlier this week. The Premier's government didn't support the deal. When asked what their position is, they say—they said, stay tuned.

Instead, the Premier, who made his fortune in the private pension industry, lectured Manitobans on the need for private pension investments.

Why won't the Premier admit that his real agenda is to promote a privatized pension and that is why he won't support this historic commitment to Canada's public pension system?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, Manitobans rejected the NDP because they demonstrated what a hidden agenda looked like, and all Manitobans understand what it looked like. They went to the doors of the people of Manitoba. They walked and knocked. They promised as they looked into the eyes of the people of this beautiful province that they would not raise their taxes, then they proceeded, of course, to do exactly the opposite of what they had promised, taking, literally, hundreds of millions of dollars off the kitchen tables of working families across the province, making it harder for them to save for retirement.

And now they come here, the remnants of that party, and they claim that they're defending the very people whose pockets they picked. This is hardly a credible record.

We have an agenda to strengthen the Canada Pension Plan. We will fight for Manitoba's best interests. That is what this government is about.

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

\*(13:50)

**Ms. Marcelino:** The Premier, on CJOB, announced that he's not clawing back seniors' tax rebate, and four days before election it was confirmed by a campaign manager.

Madam Speaker, this Premier is clearly out of touch with the reality facing regular Manitobans. He said solely relying on the CPP would be a major mistake.

Well, Madam Speaker, for more than 11 million Canadians who don't have a pension—private pension plan, the biggest mistake would be to adopt this Premier's agenda and not enhance our public pension plan.

Why doesn't the Premier get the fact that many Manitobans don't have the option of investing in the stock market or offshore corporations, but they need a public pension system that works for them?

**Mr. Pallister:** And, of course, that's what we're doing: fighting for a public pension program that works for Canadians.

There are also many Canadians—*[interjection]* Members opposite had 17 years, did nothing to advance the cause of improving the Canada Pension Plan for Manitobans or Canadians generally. Now they come here and they claim they're standing up for the very people whose pockets they so liberally picked over the last number of years.

Now, a rush to approve the pension plan when it is 50 years—a half century—old and this is the first opportunity that Canadians have had to see it made better is hardly in the best interests of Canadians. There's an article today in *The Globe and Mail*; I encourage the members to have it read to them. They would find that what it says, and I quote now, is: "Many questions remain, including how the expansion will affect federal and provincial programs for low-income Canadians." These are the questions we're asking.

These—this is the opportunity this government is taking to stand up for Manitobans, including millions of Manitobans who currently do not benefit from this pension plan at all and many others who are living with a low income who stand to lose net income potentially as an improper application or change of this program may—

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

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** The Premier referenced a *Globe and Mail* article. That's one article. There are several other articles in *Globe and Mail* approving of the expansion of CPP.

Madam Speaker, the Premier is on the wrong side of history on an issue that has been discussed publicly for years. To suggest that he and his government can't reveal their position because they haven't been in government long enough is simply not acceptable. Our position as New Democrats is clear. We fought for enhanced public pensions in government. We support this historic deal today alongside with eight other Canadian provinces.

Why won't the Premier get on board and support this historic agreement to improve the CPP for Manitobans and Canadians?

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable First Minister.

**Mr. Pallister:** —government never missed an opportunity to pick the pockets of Manitobans and did so with great regularity, making it harder for Manitobans to save for retirement, making it harder for Manitobans to create jobs in their small businesses, making it harder for Manitobans to make the necessary spending decisions to support today's needs with future investments.

Nowhere else in the country was it harder than under the NDP for citizens of this country to save for retirement. Now they pretend they defend Manitobans' best interests when all they did in the past was attack those. Now, this is an historic opportunity. It's an opportunity to stand up for a better CPP. That's exactly what we're doing. We will not be rushed. We will not miss it.

Here's another quote. I encourage the members to have this read to them, and they may comprehend it if they are listening. It says here: And this announcement—"Monday's announcement raises questions as to whether every finance minister was fully aware of what had been agreed to during the fast-paced negotiations."

We are going to get this right. We will not miss the opportunity to get it right. We will stand up for Manitobans and all Canadians in the hopes that we can get this historic opportunity right.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** We wish the Premier would read other articles from *The Globe and Mail*, as well, on this issue. Not just that one article.

Madam Speaker, what is very obvious is the fact that this government is a one-person show. The Finance Minister could do nothing more than say we will be updating you as soon as we can after Cabinet

yesterday. It is pretty clear that he has to wait for the Premier's direction.

Why won't this Premier share his true agenda with Manitobans? What has he got to hide?

**Mr. Pallister:** Tremendous personal satisfaction in listening to members of the opposition speak about teams when they failed to demonstrate in any way, shape or form that they had the faintest idea what a team was when they were in government.

There is no chance that the member would want to avail herself of a historic opportunity to improve the CPP; she's just said so on behalf of her beleaguered party. That rump has said they'll adopt whatever, but half of them don't understand how the CPP works and the other half have no desire to stand up and make it work better.

We on this side of the House are a team. We will fight for Manitoba's best interests, and we will use this opportunity to make the CPP the best possible plan it can be for all Canadians.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** The Premier has embarrassed and disadvantaged our province by his decision on CPP reform.

Under the NDP, we were leading proponents of enhancing the CPP. Under the Premier, this Premier, we now have a government that is promoting a private pension plan system that benefits corporations like Sun Life, but won't come clean with its real agenda.

Why is the Premier once again imposing his own personal agenda on this government and the people of Manitoba?

**Mr. Pallister:** On this side of the House is the agenda of Manitobans' best interests.

The member uses a phrase: leading proponents. Perhaps the member would like to address the record in this particular subject and suggest to Manitobans how it could be that anyone, any political organization that would go to the doors of Manitobans, look them in the eye, promise not to raise their taxes, and then raise their taxes on their very homes—the very homes they went to—by 8 per cent on their home insurance was helping Manitobans in any way, shape or form save for a better retirement.

Maybe she could explain and put on the record how going to the people of Manitoba, promising that she and her colleagues would not raise the taxes on Manitobans, and then raising them on the benefits that people purchase through their employment opportunities to protect their very families by eight additional percentage points was doing anything but jeopardizing the ability of Manitobans and their working families to work in the best interests of securing a better retirement for themselves.

This is a government—this previous government—that has repeatedly demonstrated that it will raid the pocketbooks of Manitobans because it has a spending problem it can never get under control. We will.

**Madam Speaker:** I would just like to encourage all members that, when asking questions or providing answers, that they do it through the Chair. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** If there's any explanations to be done, the Premier has to explain to seniors why he clawed back their tax rebate.

Madam Speaker, this is one of the most important public issues we are dealing with today, the pension plan, the CPP pension plan. It will determine whether young Manitobans today will have decent pensions tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, it is time for leadership on this issue. Eight provinces and the federal government have had the guts to stand for public pensions.

Why is the Premier hiding his true agenda? Why won't he admit his goal is to undercut public pension reform and promote a failed privatized pension agenda?

**Mr. Pallister:** I would encourage the member to get in touch with the facts. The facts are these: Manitobans have had their incomes eroded by the previous administration's monstrous tax hikes by more than any other Canadian citizens. Manitoba's economy would be more jeopardized by increases in payroll tax than any other province.

The members opposite appear not to be concerned about the impact of their previous decisions on the poor in our province. They appear not to be concerned about the impact on Manitoba families, Madam Speaker, and they appear not to be at all aware of the fact that the CPP is not funded by

governments, but is funded by Manitoba working families and small-business employers.

\* (14:00)

Manitobans deserve to have a plan that works for them. We will fight for such a plan. There are a number of areas of concern. There are a lot of loose ends according to this columnist, again, in *The Globe and Mail*, in a different article, a lot of loose ends to be tied up, and I would say, says this commentator, an expert on pensions, I would say the arbitrary deadline could be an obstacle to getting those things right.

We will not accept that after over half a century, this opportunity should be missed. We will fight for Manitobans' best interests. The members opposite never took a stand in favour of CPP reform—

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

#### **Canada Pension Plan Reform Government Position**

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** You know, the Premier's not admitting what the rest of us in Manitoba know, and the fact is that he's blinded by his own association with the private sector when it comes to pensions. At least part of the Horatio Alger story the Premier likes to tell owes itself to his relationship to selling private pensions for Sun Life over many, many years. In fact, this morning, he just told us that he's still a registered salesperson for Sun Life.

Will the First Minister admit that he needs to stop acting like a salesperson for Sun Life, and start acting like the Premier of Manitoba and join the national consensus on the CPP?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** In the last week to 10 days of the NDP's campaign in the last provincial election they resorted to the Donald Trump style of politics. They launched into character assassination and techniques designed to prop up their fading support. They did so much to their own, well, eventual embarrassment, if they are reflecting on those tactics. Many commentators including former NDP supporters have said the same.

The member now attempts to impugn my integrity and attack my motivations, and he has no justification in doing so, none whatsoever. I would encourage him not to do that. I would encourage him to realize there's a reason Manitobans rejected that kind of politics, because Manitobans believe in honest and straightforward questions and answers in

this place, as I am giving to him now. I would encourage him not to resort to this style of politics.

Alleging, as he has just done, that I'm in some sort of conflict as a part of the discussion around CPP reform, something that's happening for the first time in 60 years in our country, is over the top and I would encourage him to depart from that type of tactic.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Allum:** The Premier and his Finance Minister won't tell us who they've consulted with when it comes to the CPP, but they did meet with Sun Life when they met—went to Toronto after the budget, and Sun Life is not part of the consortium of lenders premiers normally meet with at this time.

Will the Finance Minister come clean with Manitobans today, and tell us why he won't stand up to his Premier and support the national consensus on the CPP that eight out of nine other provinces have joined in this country?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance):** Well, first of all, and once again, the member is wrong. The trip to Toronto that we undertook was important to give consolation to lenders to the Province of Manitoba in the lieu of record borrowings by the previous government, borrowings that in this year alone amount to \$6.5 billion. Never before have we been there as a province.

In respect of his question on CPP enhancement, however, the member is also wrong because we've said, very clearly, it is—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Friesen:** And we've said very importantly—earnestly, that it's important to get this discussion right. We will take the time. We will get it right, and others are standing with us today to say, when it comes to proceeding too hastily, mistakes get made.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, after the Finance Minister refused to say what alternatives he had in mind for the CPP, he told the media that he would have 20—he would get more information in 24 hours.

It's now 48 hours later. We still don't know what alternatives they're going to put on the table, and that's because there are no alternatives.

So—well, I ask now the Premier (Mr. Pallister): Will he phone the Finance Minister, pick up the phone today, the federal Finance Minister, tell him he's sorry. Tell him he's sorry, tell him he's sorry he embarrassed Manitobans and he's going to sign the agreement on the CPP right now, today, this afternoon? Will he make that commitment to the House?

**Mr. Friesen:** You know, there's so much misinformation on the other side of the House. I think that they demonstrate very well the need for financial literacy on these matters.

Only yesterday and the day before they were suggesting somehow that seniors would be helped right now. Nothing could be further from the truth. They suggested in their conversations that it's about income support. It's not; it's about income replacement. But this is very peculiar because now they're talking about some kind of long-held position on CPP enhancement whereby only a year ago—only a year ago—only a year ago their own members were talking about a preference for a go-it-alone Ontario-style approach.

Which one is it, and why can't they get their message straight?

#### **Sewage Treatment Plant Timeline for Improvements**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Can the government please explain why they've removed the deadline for improvements to the City of Winnipeg's North End sewage treatment plant?

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development):** Thank you to the member opposite.

Unless he knows something different that I don't know, we haven't had any contact with the City of Winnipeg requesting anything like that.

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

**Mr. Allum:** Well, it's very interesting to hear that from the minister. There are headlines in local media with titles such as, no completion date in the pipe for North End sewage treatment plant upgrades. So there certainly used to be deadlines in place, put in place by our government. We are now getting reports that those have been removed.

I'm wondering: Just to get a sense of the scale of the challenge that this government might be walking away from, can the minister tell us how many tons of phosphorus are going from Winnipeg into Lake Winnipeg right now?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you so much for that question. It's a question that—or it's a concern that we do have in government, and it's a question that members opposite have had for 17 years.

We're working together with the City of Winnipeg. It's a huge project, and it's a project that we haven't been told about any different deadlines that were—are currently in place.

So thanks for that. And if he knows any information that I don't, I'd look forward to hearing it.

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

**Mr. Allum:** Yes, well, this very same minister is quoted in the article written by Bartley Kives from CBC News as saying that her government is now open to a different approach on this project, and it will be interesting to see what comes out of this. I'm sure the reporter will have some questions for the minister.

Assuming the—assuming that the minister didn't know the answer to my second question, the correct answer, though it'll vary from year to year, is over 400 tons of phosphorus because these plants have not been improved.

Our party had \$100 million on the table. Where has that money gone?

Why is this government not taking sewage improvement seriously for the future of Manitoba?

**Mrs. Cox:** I thank the member opposite for that question.

\* (14:10)

You've had 17 years to find out those figures and not get it right and not ensure that there's been any less phosphorus or nitrogen leached out into the public water. So I thank you for that question.

And I do know that when we did talk to the Winnipeg Sun recently we did indicate that it was a huge product—project and the upgrades are extensive, and we're going to work with the City and attempt to balance the costs and ensure that there's a reasonable timeline. I don't know where you've heard that the

dates have changed, but if you've got something in writing, I'd appreciate seeing it.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** I would just ask that all members when making their answers or questions that they direct them through the Chair and in the third-party words instead of using the word you, so that would help the debate immensely. So thank you very much.

### **Investment in Child Care Government Funding Plan**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** In 2010, in the fifth year of a federal transfer agreement, Manitoba was slated to receive \$54.8 million for child care. Our NDP government invested this money as part of its work in building 100 new facilities, improving wages and creating the first ever pension plan for ECEs and child-care workers and maintained the lowest child-care fees in Canada outside of Quebec.

With no real plan to address the growing child-care needs in Manitoba, is this government planning to meet with the federal government to request a similar partnership to improve child care in Manitoba?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

Child care is extremely important to us as a government. That's why we have a strong plan to enhance child care for the citizens of Manitoba. We think that there's too much red tape and barriers to starting child care. We know that home-based child care is part of the answer. We also know that partnering with school divisions is an important piece of the equation. We also know that having more ECEs, whether you provide them through bursaries, is a part of the answer. So that's why we're so excited about our project in terms of our plan for child care moving forward.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Swan:** Well, the minister talks of a plan, but he hasn't actually given Manitobans any detail on what this plan might be. This is a challenging file. It's challenging to keep up even when you're running hard. It is impossible when you're standing still.

Last year the NDP government increased capital funding support to 40 per cent of capital costs for non-profit, community-based child-care projects.

This capital funding would build on our record of creating 14,000 new licensed spaces from 1999 to 2016, building 100 new facilities and creating 70 annual training spaces for ECEs.

Since this government commitment so far is to fund only home-based centres and refusing to fund any new builds, including those new works, can Manitoba families and child-care workers conclude this government is abandoning this funding model?

**Mr. Fielding:** Our government is extremely proud of the plan that we have for child care. We think that, once again, if we—if you have partnerships with school divisions, if you have an ability to reduce red tape in terms of providing some of the daycares—child-care spaces that are there, one thing is for sure: We believe our plan is most realistic.

The plan that we had for the NDP over the last 17 years is to have over 12,000 people on the waiting list. I can guarantee you one thing. By the end of this term of the government, we will not be in the realms—we will not be promising pie-in-the-sky proposals that we don't think is realistic. We think our plan is the most realistic.

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

**Mr. Swan:** Well, when the Minister for Families realizes that this government—the NDP government created 14,000 new, licensed daycare spaces in Manitoba, it's not pie in the sky; it's pie in the face.

This minister needs to be aware—this government needs to continue to make substantial investments in child care like the NDP government did just to keep up with the growing demand as our population continues to grow at a record amount. And so far, Madam Speaker, they're falling flat. Funding only home-based child care, which appears to be the only thing in the minister's plan, will eliminate the wait-list at a mere four kids at a time and will result in higher fees for families.

Will the minister admit that his lack of a plan follows the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) record of making cuts to child care and cheerleading the Harper government—

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

**Mr. Fielding:** It gives great pleasure to come up a third time to talk about our plan. We think our plan is the most realistic plan for child care in the province. You have 17 years where the NDP—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Fielding:** If their plan was so good, how come there's over 12,000 people on the waiting list? That's the question I'd like to ask the member.

We've got a realistic plan for child care we think will make a difference. We think partnerships with the school divisions, we think having more ECEs part of the equation makes a lot of a difference and more child care. We're there to provide a realistic plan, not pie-in-the-sky announcements with—what you heard from the NDP the last number of years without practical solutions.

We're about practical solutions.

### **Crime Prevention Initiatives Community Involvement**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, the topic of crime and safety is a hot one in Burrows.

Many have expressed to me that we need a community-oriented approach in dealing with crime and ensuring that residents are feeling safe. If done right, we can all benefit from this. It encourages community involvement. It assists in police stations and court systems. It can even prevent victimization.

What is this government going to do to ensure that our communities can be part of the solution for improving safety in our province?

Thank you.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Well, I thank the member for Burrows for the question. She is correct; a lot of the solutions that happen when it comes to crime and when it comes to making our neighbourhoods safer happen at the ground level.

I can cite, for example, the Citizens on Patrol Program, a program that's existed in Manitoba for many years, a successful program that engages citizens, that have citizens that are involved to ensure that they are not only on the streets of their communities but they are the eyes and the ears of their communities.

So I have many different ways that communities can have citizens involved.

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

**Ms. Lamoureux:** The minister is correct; that is one way.

But another form of community involvement, and a suggestion that was often brought up during the election in Burrows, is the idea of community-based police stations. If the goal is to have less crime, safer residents and community involvement, this government needs to consider supporting these community police stations.

My question is simple: Is this government ready to explore a new and effective model for community-based policing stations?

Thank you.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, Madam Speaker, I believe that the government and the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) is very committed to working with our various municipal police forces here in the city of Winnipeg and across Manitoba.

Obviously, we take input from the police in terms of how they believe the strategies for policing are best succeeded and best carried out. They obviously have their own ideas in terms of how things should be done, in terms of deployment of their resources. And, certainly, we know that the outgoing police of chief has done a great job in some of that, and we commend him for his work.

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

**Ms. Lamoureux:** If safety is a priority here in Manitoba, how come there hasn't been any action on it taken yet?

In the province of Manitoba, there are 37 active youth justice committees, not one of them being inside the city of Winnipeg. During Estimates, the Minister of Justice confirmed this but was quick to remind me that Winnipeg does have diversion programs. I recognize this, but, Madam Speaker, I would argue that we need youth justice committees in the city of Winnipeg because they permit community involvement.

Can this government explain to me how they feel that Winnipeg diversion programs engage adequately with the community in dealing with young offenders?

Thank you.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, I'm a little concerned that the member for Burrows begins her question by saying

that there's been no action taken to make communities safer.

I would say to her that our police officers, the men and women who are involved in making our communities safer every day, are there each and every day; each and every day they leave their homes and they go to try to make our communities safer. Each and every day, they know that they might be putting their lives on the line.

If the member opposite truly believes that those men and women aren't doing something to make our communities safer, I would say she's wrong. We stand with our police.

### **Protecting Children Act Stakeholder Collaboration**

**Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond):** Madam Speaker, today members of our government were joined by Sheldon Kennedy, an advocate and former hockey player, to speak about the importance of the protecting children act. This bill will help government and service providers collaborate and will get better results for at-risk and vulnerable children and families.

\* (14:20)

Could the Minister of Families please inform the House of some of the new measures in the protecting children act that will help our government protect vulnerable children in our province?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, for the question, and thank you for the hard-working member for the great question that's there. It allows me to have the opportunity to talk about the protecting children act, which we think is critical. It's critical that you allow information to be shared with service providers, people in law enforcement agencies and government. It's critical that you're able to react better, you're able to provide early intervention and prevention.

We are very pleased that our Premier (Mr. Pallister) made this a priority in the first 100 days of office.

I was glad that the Premier was able to join us at Snowflake with 50 other stakeholder groups to talk about the initiative as well with Sheldon Kennedy. We know how important this is and that's why this has become a major priority for this government within the first 100 days.

### **Indigenous Committee of Cabinet Establishment Inquiry**

**Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas):** According to the mandate letter of the Minister of Indigenous Relations she is responsible to consult with indigenous communities, and it says to form teams with her Cabinet colleagues to ensure partnerships with First Nations to create jobs and economic prosperity, economic opportunities.

We also have a Prime Minister who has said, and I quote: Yes, we will be the partner that Manitoba needs when it comes to working with our First Nation communities. There is incredible potential with our indigenous communities across Manitoba.

So I ask the minister: Can she tell us if the indigenous committee of Cabinet has been established with the teams that she's formed with her Cabinet colleagues?

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations):** I thank the member opposite for the question.

We have, indeed. I'm very proud of the number of meetings I have had with indigenous councils as well as groups within the indigenous communities, community leaders. The list is actually very extensive.

I'm also proud that I have had meetings to date with two federal ministers—and the one being Indigenous Affairs. I've met with her twice, and the agreement for partnerships going forward is very strong and we look forward to working on that.

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

### **First Nations Communities Community Benefits Agreements**

**Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas):** As part of reconciliation, the TRC has called the governments and the private sector to ensure that indigenous peoples have access to training and employment.

An example of this, of course, is the east-side road. Thirteen isolated First Nations signed multimillion-dollar agreements, community benefits agreements, and have trained up to 1,000 First Nations people.

We have asked repeatedly, and we're going to ask again today: Has the government taken the time to contact these First Nations directly to let them

know that these agreements will continue to be honoured?

**Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations):** I thank you, again, for that question.

I'm very happy to be meeting with these people that he speaks of on Monday. We have a very lengthy agenda and the discussions have been held and there's going to be a lot more. These issues are not decided in a day or a week, but we will continue to meet with them and work on their behalf as long as it takes.

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

**Mr. Chief:** MKO Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson recently outlined a 10-point plan to support economic development in Northern Manitoba. We know the Business Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, to name a few, all agree that Aboriginal engagement is a key to growing Manitoba's economy.

Will the minister stand with the calls to action by the grand chief, by the TRC, by Manitoba's business community, and honour the agreements with the 13 isolated First Nation communities that have been signed, Madam Speaker?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** And I do appreciate the question from the member.

I can assure the member that we have various departments in consultation with indigenous communities around our province. We've been spending some time in northern Manitoba in discussion with them. I'm actually going to be meeting with Chief Wilson tomorrow and I'm looking forward to that discussion, and we will, at that point in time, be reviewing her—the economic plan that they've put forward.

And I think it does dovetail quite nicely with our 10-point economic plan that we will be fulfilling here over the course of the next few months and the next couple of years.

So we look forward to continued discussions with the Aboriginal community.

### **Workplace Illness and Injury Prevention Health and Safety Indicators**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** An injury to one worker is an injury to all. Manitoba Five-Year Plan for Workplace Injury and Illness Prevention was a strategy released in 2013 to strengthen protections for workers in the province.

Can the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade please inform the House of what progress has been made on the development of leading indicators for measuring the state of safety and health in Manitoba?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** I do appreciate that particular question from the member.

I will inform the member that we met with the Manitoba Employers Council today over lunch. We talked about a lot of different issues. We talked about economic growth for communities and northern communities. We also talked extensively about Workers Compensation Board, and we talked about workplace health and safety regulations. Certainly, there was some current concerns brought forward from them.

We will continue to consult with Manitobans and make positive changes in that regard.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** The minister in his answer seemed to be somewhat unaware that perhaps this is a legislated responsibility of the Chief Prevention Officer.

Will the minister assure Manitobans that such indicators of safety and health outcomes will be incorporated as key objectives in any value-for-money audits contemplated by the government?

**Mr. Cullen:** Clearly, this government takes safety of employees very, very strict, very well to heart, and we certainly will be looking at the legislation, any changes that maybe we—may need to be made. We will certainly also make sure that positions are filled in terms of looking after and addressing public safety.

Certainly, the member may know that we're also undertaking the review of the Workers Compensation Board, and certainly the public will have input into recommendations around the Workers Compensation Board. We look forward to having more discussions with both employers,

employees and certainly people from the labour side as well.

So, Madam Speaker, after 17 years there is still more work to do in Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

### Bell's Purchase of MTS

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of the petition is as follows:

The Manitoba telephone system is currently a fourth cellular carrier used by Manitobans along with the big national three carriers: Telus, Rogers and Bell.

In Toronto, with only the big three national companies controlling the market, the average five-gigabyte unlimited monthly cellular package is \$117 as compared to Winnipeg where MTS charges \$66 for the same package.

Losing MTS will mean less competition and will result in higher costs for all cellphone packages in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government do all that is possible to prevent the Bell takeover of MTS and preserve a more competitive cellphone market so that cellular bills for Manitobans do not increase unnecessarily.

And this petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

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

Any further petitions?

### Legislative Building—Gender Neutral Washroom

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

The reasons for this petition are:

(1) The Legislative Building is a public building where everyone should feel welcome and feel comfortable.

(2) Washrooms in the Manitoba legislative and other government buildings are labelled as men and women, which do not fit the gender identities of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to designate one washroom in the Legislative Building and all other government of Manitoba buildings as a gender neutral washroom.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

*(Continued)*

### House Business

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, on House business, I wish to table copies of the opposition list of government ministers to be called Monday for concurrence.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** On House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will be meeting on Monday, June 27th at 9 a.m. for the purpose of electing a new Chairperson and a new Vice-Chairperson.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will be meeting on Monday, June 27th at 9 a.m. for the purpose of electing a new Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

**Mr. Goertzen:** On House business, Madam Speaker, could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to waive the sessional order provision requiring a break between 12 noon and 1 p.m. tomorrow in the sections of Committee of Supply, with the intention that the sections will continue to sit without this break until the 100 hours of Estimate time has expired?

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to waive the sessional order provision requiring a break between 12 noon and 1 p.m. tomorrow in the sections of the Committee of Supply, with the intention that the

sections will continue to sit without this break until the 100 hours of Estimate time has expired?  
[Agreed]

\* \* \*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, could the House please resolve into Committee of Supply?

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**  
**(Concurrent Sections)**  
*(Continued)*

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

\* (14:40)

**The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Sustainable Development.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development):** Yes, I do.

On behalf of the Department of Sustainable Development I would like to thank you for joining me and our staff here today. It's an honour and pleasure to be here as the new Minister of Sustainable Development. I can assure you that this is not a responsibility I take lightly. Our natural resources are precious, and I am honoured that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of Manitoba tasked and trusted me with Manitoba's most important assets.

As I often say, there is no second chance in this department. The decisions we make today will impact our future generations. Our government will make balanced decisions that protect our environment and ensure sustainability of natural resources while still allowing for sound economic opportunity.

Growing up, I was fortunate to spend summers at the lake, and I have many fond memories of my family at the family cottage. And, although the word environment was not as widely used then, my dad instilled in us the importance of protecting our environment. He taught my brother and I the

wonders of nature and the importance of respecting our forests and protecting our wildlife.

Got a little bit off track, so I'll just get back to the reason we are all here today. I'd like to introduce my staff, but they're all—[interjection] Okay, later? Okay.

So, if I would, I'd just like to take a few moments to acknowledge the hard work demonstrated each and every day by the staff of the Department of Sustainable Development. Since my appointment on May 3rd, I've had the opportunity to meet and listen with many staff members ranging from assistant deputy ministers to front-line workers. And, regardless of their capacity, they all display such a sincere commitment to this ministry.

As a new minister, I have done a lot of listening over the past six weeks, and I can truly say I am impressed by their eagerness, 'enthusiasm'—enthusiasm and patience displayed by staff during these briefings and presentations. We are all like-minded people working together for a better Manitoba and a commitment to improve, protect, preserve our forestry, wildlife, fish and natural resources.

My sincere thanks to all of you.

Sustainable Development, the new name of the department, reflects my government's commitment to meeting the needs of Manitobans today while protecting the environment for future generations. This is inherent in the work that all we do. We must work together to ensure that our environment is safe, our economy is strong and our people are healthy—today and into the future.

My department will work in partnership with all Manitobans, indigenous peoples, businesses, non-profits, municipalities and other stakeholders to reach our shared goal of protecting the environment while promoting sustainable economic development.

Manitoba Sustainable Development is responsible for managing and protecting the environment as well as ensuring the rich biodiversity of our natural resources. We are charged with protecting Manitoba's water, wildlife, fish and forests. And this is a job that we all take seriously.

Allow me to outline and briefly describe for you all today some of the department's targeted activities. The department will implement a province-wide program based on the Alternative Land Use Services model, the ALUS model. This program will help

reduce flooding and improve water quality and nutrient management. The ALUS program will be implemented in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, municipalities and conservation districts. Other key stakeholders include the federal government, landowners and non-government organizations.

The department is committed to implementing watershed-based planning for drainage and water resources. Our goal is a no-net-loss of water retention capacity in Manitoba watersheds. Effective water management is essential to reducing the costly impact of flooding, holding back water that can be used in droughts, and removing excess nutrients that cause harmful algae in our waters.

The department will help develop comprehensive harvest co-management strategies in consultation with First Nations, Metis and licensed 'huntsters' and anglers to ensure that long-term sustainability of our wildlife populations. We will ensure the local communities have a greater voice around harvesting. The co-management strategy will help ensure the long-term sustainability of our wildlife populations. And the department will prevent unsustainable and unsafe hunting practices, such as night hunting, to keep Manitobans safe.

My government is committed to safe hunting practices, collaborative relationships and sustainable harvest limits. We will seek to improve safe hunting practices in Manitoba through an enhanced hunter education program, and resources will be developed in partnership with indigenous organizations, hunting associations, municipalities and other stakeholders.

Effective, innovative big game surveys are needed to provide accurate and transparent population data to wildlife managers—yes. My government will increase scientific, citizen-based and traditional knowledge of Manitoba's wildlife. This knowledge will be used to guide decision making to better manage wildlife in the province. In the past, Manitoba's big game populations have been subject to increased hunting pressures. Other Canadian provinces are facing similar challenges regarding the sustainability of big game populations. The department will implement more effective big game surveys to provide access to the population data, and this will support strategies to ensure the sustainability of big game populations.

It's a priority of my government to support and promote fishing in Manitoba. As such, the department is developing a credible strategy to

secure certification of Manitoba's commercial fisheries. This will support a sustainable fishing industry for years to come. Fishing supports local economies and brings tourists to our province. We are committed to working in partnership with fishers to ensure that harvests are sustainable. We will provide the best possible income for fishers today while sustaining fish populations for future generations.

And the department will reconcile the needs of industry in rural and northern communities while continuing to enhance the network of protected areas in Manitoba.

Our province has a rich, natural heritage that must be maintained for future generations. Protected areas play an important role in preserving the province's natural ecosystems and biodiversity in sustaining a healthy economy.

The balance between development and protection will be based on informed decision making. Manitoba's resource industries sustain rural and northern communities and provide economic development opportunities for remote indigenous communities. And the department will work to continue with—will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure that sustainable development is an important consideration in the parks and protected areas planning process.

The department will conduct the required consultations for future of land under park reserve status. There are currently four park reserves in Manitoba and the public consultation process is under way. Three of these reserves are on islands within Lake Winnipegosis, and were nominated by local First Nation communities. These are Goose Island, Grand Island and Pemmican Island Reserves; public consultation for these sites are complete and discussions with indigenous communities are ongoing.

The fourth park reserve is Amisk Park Reserve, the consultation is linked to—I hope I get this right—Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation land and resource management planning process. And once this process is complete, the department will conclude its own public consultation. The department is committed to an open and transparent consultation process on the future of land under park reserve status.

And our department will implement a two-year moratorium on all lease and service fee increases for cottages in provincial parks. We will engage

cottagers and other stakeholders in consultations to develop a more equitable fee structure for the future.

My government will work with the federal government and other jurisdictions to develop a made-in-Manitoba climate action plan. The plan will include carbon pricing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, keep investment capital in Manitoba and stimulate innovation and clean energy. This will create new jobs and businesses in Manitoba and help deliver on our commitment to be the most improved province in job creation, as well as most improved in partnerships with businesses and communities. As part of the made-in-Manitoba climate action plan, we will adopt land use and conservation measures to sequester carbon.

My government will look at opportunities to reduce the emissions from commercial buildings through building codes. This and other measures will be used to put government on a path to carbon neutrality.

The department will support fuel-saving technology and other measures to reduce emissions within the transportation sector. Our climate action plan will include real targets; these targets will support national efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and we will consult with Manitobans in an open and transparent manner.

I've received a mandate letter from our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and based on that letter we will continue to work with the department to ensure that Manitobans are best protected with regard to parks, and ensure that the environment is also protected. We've introduced a zebra mussel plan that's almost \$700,000 in our budget this year; an increase of, I believe, \$530,000 from last year.

Much more to talk about but unfortunately my time is running out. So I'd just like to say thank you to everybody and I look forward to this process.

**The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Yes. I was waiting for that part. Not really, Madam Chair, we can jump right into it.

**The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** We thank the critic.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly we shall now defer consideration of line item 12.1.(a) contained in resolution 12.1.

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

\* (14:50)

**Mrs. Cox:** I'd like to introduce the staff in my department.

First of all, to my left is Grant Doak, deputy minister; Bruce Gray, ADM of Water Stewardship and Biodiversity; Bruce Bremner, ADM of Parks and Regional Services; Matt Wiebe, I'm sure you've heard that name before, different Matt Wiebe, ADM of Finance and Crown Lands; Neil Cunningham, director of Climate Change and Air Quality; Nicole Armstrong, director of Water, Science and Management; and Tracey Braun, director of Environmental Approvals.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or have a global discussion?

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Global would work just fine.

**The Acting Chairperson (Sara Guillemard):** Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I want to say official greetings and hello to the minister. We'll get to do this dance a few times, I'm sure, in the months ahead, and I have a degree of familiarity with the work that the department has been undertaking. It's really nice to see the staff here again, and I thank all of you for your work together on behalf of the planet and the people who live in this particular part of it, in the days ahead.

Just to start off with some fairly basic administrative questions. Could the minister please

provide the committee with her definition of what a front-line worker is in the—in her department?

**Mrs. Cox:** I'd like to thank you so much for your comments too. I look forward to having good discussions with you today, and I know that you've been on this part of the chair process before—

**An Honourable Member:** A few hours.

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, exactly. So, anyway, yes, with regard to your question, I think that front-line worker is by definition, is anybody who's hands-on and directly, you know, works with the public, and in our department, we have so many of them, as you know.

And we have conservation officers who are working, you know, every day to protect our wildlife and also to protect Manitobans from hunters and other individuals out there in the forest. We have a parks maintenance staff who do very important work in our parks, and I think those people deserve a lot of credit for what they do. Sometimes we underestimate the jobs that they do, but they—very important.

Wildfire crew, and I know that they just did an amazing job recently with regard to the fires that we had, and can't thank them enough for what they did, most certainly. I know that our son was out a few weeks ago and came across a group of about 10 of them, and they were camped out on the lake and just making sure that any wildfires or hotspots were taken care of. And we actually had the opportunity to go last—on Saturday out to that area and take a look at it, walked out there with our son, and just amazing to see what they do and what they've done to protect our province. I mean, they cut down so many trees, and I was really, I guess, it sort of was a very enlightening experience to know that when a fire burns, it actually burns through the centre of a tree, so you could see the whole tree was entirely hollowed out, and they had cut it down. And, of course, the regrowth was already starting. So it was, yes, it was very enlightening.

And just can't say enough for all the work that we did. I know that we did send letters out to, I think, most, or a lot of the wildfire crews, and thank you so much for what they did.

Of course, we also have so many, I guess, people that work front-line services besides the conservation officers: the wildfires, the park maintenance—I mean, we have people who work to protect our water system; and each and every day make sure that there's licences in place; and, of course, check our, you know, our Brady landfill, for example, to which—

ensure that they're following the rules there; ensure that any of the other emitters follow the rules and any of the other companies that maybe, you know, within environmental regulations and licences and things like that.

So all of those I would consider to be front-line people, people that do important work—not that I'm saying that others don't do important work, but, yes, you know, anybody who works directly and protects our province, works hard for our province. And we'll continue to do that within this great portfolio that I have.

So thank you for that question.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Thank the minister for that.

I note the department is down 12 FTEs. Could I get a list of just the job descriptions maybe of those 12 positions that have disappeared in this year's budget?

And, if that's not all compiled right now, the minister can take it under advisement and just provide it later. That would be fine by me.

**Mrs. Cox:** We'll attempt to get it for you right now.

I'm pleased to say that our government has been very responsible in reviewing the budgets of all the departments, and Sustainable Development is no different. As I move forward in my time as the minister, I look forward to working with the staff and management of the department on budgeting.

And looking at the budget for 2016, as I indicated the other day, the zebra mussels program and AIS prevention program has been expanded. And given the great threat of zebra mussels and invasive species to our waters, the budget has identified specific funding increases of \$530, so I think it's up to \$680,000, our budget, now, for zebra mussels and AIS.

The department also increased salary budgets by just under \$1.5 billion to account for general salary increases which relate to the new collective agreement that was signed. And this accounts for the increases to civil servant salaries in 2016 and '17.

And the department also increased salary lines by a total of \$926,000 to account for normal salary adjustments which occur mainly based on staff moving through different pay grades.

These salary increases on the budget require the department to review other areas to look for opportunities to save funds. It's important to our

government to manage expenditures and correct the course. Our government is an important player in reviewing and finding ways to save dollars.

Therefore, the department found \$252,000 in savings through operating reductions, which were found by all divisions, reviewing spending and looking for operating efficiencies.

\*(15:00)

In addition, the department eliminated the equivalent of 12 full-time positions with the department following a review of departmental priorities and functions. Front-line services that Manitobans rely on have not been affected, and no layoffs of personnel occurred. This will result in a savings of \$881,000.

And, finally, due to the department's continued efforts to income—to improve capital infrastructure in parks, campgrounds and in the fire program, amortization on interest budgets have increased, in the budget for 2016, by \$1.6 million.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So the 12 positions that have disappeared—the minister mentioned there were no layoffs. So I assume these were vacancies that have now been eliminated from the books?

**Mrs. Cox:** When looking at the budget for this department, I have definitely seen that decisions were made in the past number of years to significantly reduce the staffing and operating budgets.

For example, over the past four years, approximately 100 positions called full-time employment—or, full-time equivalents, or FTEs, were eliminated from the department because of the reductions to the department's budget allotment. The department's overall budget was reduced by over \$17 million, or 11 per cent, over the past four years. And, also, the department had to absorb increased amortization and interest costs which resulted from capital projects that got completed, and then amortization and interest payments began.

Because of the department's aggressive capital plan from years past, the income was that amortization and interest charges increased by millions of dollars over the past four years. To add to the challenge of this increased cost, the department did not receive new funding for this cost, but had to cut salary and operating budgets to pay for amortization and interest. The increased amortization and interest increases the department has

accommodated over the past four years has amounted to \$3.3 million, which is a pressure in addition to the \$17-million budget reduction.

The budget has had to absorb these financial and budgetary pressures by holding positions vacant and reducing operating expenses. The vacancy rate as of March 31, 2016, was just over 12 per cent and, typically, the department maintains a vacancy rate of about 15 per cent to meet its budget. This also adds additional pressure onto the department to carry out its mandate, and the budget reductions over the past four years have added to that pressure.

I'm glad to say that our new government has made many great strides and improvements. This can be seen in the department's budget. Our Premier (Mr. Pallister) continues to discuss the importance of transparency and getting budgets back on track without risking front-line services. With this balanced and thoughtful approach in mind, the department has seen an overall increase in its budget over last year, a sign that this government is committed to sustainable development. For example, again, increases in the zebra mussel and AIS prevention program have led to a new, increased budget of just under \$700,000—or, \$680,000.

At the same time, we are working to be more responsible and manage future years by creating a more sensible, thoughtful approach to capital planning which will, in time, allow us to have more control over amortization and interest increases.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Yes, that's all well and fine, but I was wondering—the 12 positions that have been removed from the budget this year according to page 10—and this is overall, you know, across the whole department—could I please, on behalf of our committee here, receive just the titles of the job descriptions that were eliminated?

**Mrs. Cox:** These vacancies are 12 full-time FTEs, or full-time employees. Through efficiencies, we've found the ability to leave these positions vacant. They are not any front-line service positions, by any means, but they are just positions that we've found that no longer necessary, just based on the fact that we are running a more efficient department.

**The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** The honourable member for Wolseley.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Oh, I'll wait 'til she's ready.

**Mrs. Cox:** Just to be corrected that these vacant positions may have been front line but they've been

reassigned to other people. So there are no cuts in front-line services to anybody. They've been accommodated within other employee positions.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** A vacancy is a normal thing in all departments, of course, as people come and go and shift to different roles. The 12 per cent vacancy mark is good to know. I appreciate that ballpark figure. But vacancies and the reduction in the number of FTEs are two different things. And I appreciate the minister has, you know, been in the job a whopping two months, and there's lots of details. I've long held the view that the day that you're in this building and you don't learn anything is the day you should consider resigning because you're just not paying attention. I try and learn a whole bunch of stuff every day.

But vacancies, like, vacant positions, are still listed as FTE positions within a government's department. So my previous question, just looking, again, at page 10, according to the minister's own document, there's 1,124 FTEs in her department. That would include vacancies, the vacancy rate being 12 per cent; 12 per cent of that number means that many positions are not currently filled by staff. But to say that the reduction in 12 positions have been reassigned still doesn't remove the fact that the department is now left with 12 fewer positions to work with, and I'm still looking for a description of which jobs were removed from the department's portfolio by the government's budget.

\* (15:10)

**Mrs. Cox:** Okay, I did—my staff were able to get that information for you. Two political staff within the minister's office, two resource technicians, one environmental officer, one trainer, three administrative positions, one director and two policy analysts.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** That's great. Thank you very much. I appreciate the detail.

And speaking of the ever-popular political staff, I used to be one myself, as a few of us, perhaps, around the table at various points in time. Would the minister be so kind to just give us the names and the positions of the order-in-council, the political staff that are attached to her department in some way.

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, I have Bruce Verry, who's my special assistant, and I also have Raquel Dancho, who's my executive assistant, and that's a decrease from previous ministers.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Thank you very much for that. I seem to recall previous ministers had SAs and EAs as well. Can the minister clarify what the reduction is that she's referring to?

**Mrs. Cox:** Just from reading previous Estimates reports, I did note that other ministers had special advisers as well, so.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Does the minister have anyone from what our government used to refer to as Cabinet communications, the priorities and planning committee or policy branch assigned to her department?

**Mrs. Cox:** We do have one individual who's shared with, I believe, three other ministers in Cabinet communications and stakeholder relations.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Could we have the name of that person, please?

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, his name is Kalen Qually.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** And what is the salary or salary range of the SA and the EA and the other person in Cabinet communications attached to the minister?

**Mrs. Cox:** Bruce Verry, he's—his classification is special assistant, and his salary would be on the OIC. And same with Raquel Dancho, she's the—EXA is her level, and also would be on the order-in-council.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Now, if I'm reading page 20 of the department Estimates book correctly, the one FTE under executive support, is that the deputy minister under managerial?

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, you're correct.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So, just to make sure I've got it right, then, on the previous page of 18, the minister's salary went up by \$14,000. The poor, hard-working deputy minister's salary went down by 3—is that right?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I can say that you shocked our deputy minister here. Anyway—

**An Honourable Member:** You want to hang on to him.

**Mrs. Cox:** I do like him, thank you. Anyways, page 18, with regard to the minister's salary, the minister's salary is established by regulation made by the Manitoba Commissioner for MLA Pay, Allowances and Retirement Benefits, and, you know, we are doing more work as ministers. We've reduced the size of Cabinet, which is part of our government's commitment to Manitobans and we're keeping our

promises of finding efficiencies as I suppose we did within the assistant deputy minister's salary to reduce our debt and move forward toward balanced budgets and, you know, of course, that decrease in the size of Cabinet has been responsible for a \$4-million savings to the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** What is the extra work that the minister is taking on compared to what this department looked like last year? What's been added to the department's mandate?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. You know, I was proud to be offered the opportunity to represent Sustainable Development by our Premier (Mr. Pallister) back on May the 2nd, and as part of that the Premier did present me with the mandate letter and an obligation to fulfill those mandate initiatives, and as part of that, I guess, as Minister of Sustainable Development, I do play a key role in delivering on these most important issues and in particular most improved province commitment.

So we do—have said that we will be the most improved province in partnerships, initiatives with business and communities, most improved province in job creation performance, and my mandate from the Premier of Manitoba, as Minister of Sustainable Development, I am to be the lead in fulfilling the following platform commitments: implement a province-wide program based on the alternative land-use services ALUS model, to help reduce flooding and improve water quality and nutrient management in partnership with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler), as well as stakeholders, including landowners, NGOs, federal and municipal governments; implement watershed-based planning for drainage and water resource management with the goal of no net loss of water retention capacity in watersheds; develop comprehensive harvest co-management strategies in consultation with First Nations, Metis, and licensed hunters and anglers to give local communities a greater voice and ensure long-term sustainability of our wildlife populations, and curtail unsustainable and unsafe hunting practices such as night hunting to keep all Manitobans safe; implement effective and innovative big-game surveys to improve and increase the transparency of population data for managers; develop and implement a credible strategy to secure certification of Manitoba's commercial fisheries; develop a framework to reconcile the needs of industry in rural and northern communities while continuing to enhance the network of protected areas in Manitoba's natural regions; act on the required

consultation for the future of land under park reserve status; institute a two-year moratorium on all lease and service fees for cottages found within provincial parks; and work with the federal government and other jurisdictions and stakeholders as we develop a made-in-Manitoba climate action plan containing the following elements: carbon pricing that fosters emissions reduction, keeps investment capital here and stimulates new innovation in clean energy, businesses and jobs; land-use and conservation measures that sequester carbon and foster adaptation to climate change; reduce emissions from commercial buildings through building codes and other measures, putting government operations and infrastructure on a path to carbon neutrality; and encourage the adoption of fuel-saving technologies and measures within the transportation sector.

\* (15:20)

I think that the mandate letter is something new that I don't think the former government provided to their ministers, so we do have a very aggressive plan and a huge responsibility to fulfill and ensure that we do get this done. So, thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Allow me to clarify my question.

The minister had mentioned that part of the justification for the 36 per cent increase in the ministerial salaries is that now that there are a smaller number of ministers, that the ministers are doing more work, I believe, was her phrase for it.

I'm just, again, looking at page 10 of her Estimates book. Were any of the following sections of her department not in her department previously: Finance and Crown Lands, Parks and Regional Services, Environmental Stewardship, Water Stewardship and Biodiversity? Were all of those in the previously named Conservation and Water Stewardship Department last year?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, as I said, we've been given a very aggressive plan. You know, I think we're six weeks, or seven weeks, as a minister, and, you know, based on, you know, the direction that we got from the Premier, you know, we've got a lot of work to do in a very short period of time.

I know that working to address climate change, that's going to be a huge issue, you know, working to ensure, you know, surface water management, ALUS, all of those things. I think that it's a huge responsibility, and we have a big job to do. We've got a lot of consulting to do. And I know that there's

been jeers from the other side when I mention the word consulting and, you know, talking to other individuals, but I think that's important to do, you know, and to ensure that we get it right. And we do want to get it right.

We want to talk to Manitobans and talk to them about all of these policies and initiatives that we're developing. I know that, in the past, the former government in certain instances didn't consult with Manitobans. And, you know, and as a result, we saw—or as a result, you know, Manitobans, you know, said quite clearly that they wanted to be heard and they wanted to have the opportunity to be part of that decision-making process.

So I think that given all of the mandate items here in my letter, it's a huge job. It is a huge job. And we will continue to discuss and consult and talk to Manitobans. As I said, I think that's important. We want to ensure that Manitobans are listened in all the decisions that we make. And I know that there have been unfortunate situations, in some cases, where there was no consultation and there was, you know, a huge change, obviously, in the government before us as a result of not listening to Manitobans.

So, you know, we want to make sure that we get it right, that we listen and we consult and we ensure that Manitoba's voices are heard.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I guess we don't need to belabour that point anymore. It's quite clear that the—while the type of work within the realm of protecting the environment has certainly been changed by this government, and I as critic certainly have some very big concerns about the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) new direction from what we've seen, there isn't any additional portion of the work of government that has been added to this particular department's mandate or to this minister's mandate. And, despite that, the salaries go up for some and go down for others.

But just coming back to the vacancy question, I appreciate the 12 per cent number, but since we are dealing with fractions of an FTE when you add up the entire department, could the minister please tell us how many FTEs are currently vacant? Not the percentage but the number of positions in her department right now. Thank you.

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I know that in past years, they'd been huge budget reductions, and approximately 100 positions which are called full-time equivalents or FTEs, were eliminated from the department

previously, from the previous government. And that had a huge impact on front-line services.

I know that, I don't know, maybe about five years ago, I was at my cousin's home for Christmas dinner and sitting around the Christmas table and talking to an individual who worked for—or for the Department of Natural Resources. And, unfortunately, he, you know, was conservation officer, but he wasn't able to actually have full-time employment. And I was quite shocked by this and quite astounded that—when I know that the huge amount of work that they have to do in protecting our environment, our wildlife, our forests, that the government of the day, former government, wouldn't ensure that there were more conservation officers out there protecting our environment and protecting Manitobans.

So, you know, I know that 100 positions had a huge impact, and front-line positions. And our government is finding efficiencies and finding ways to ensure that we can keep Manitobans employed and keep more Manitobans employed within our department.

You know, we're saving money by reducing in other areas, finding efficiencies. I don't know, maybe photocopying, travel, paper, you know, other areas like that. I'm not quite sure all of the methods that we found efficiencies. But we're doing it so that it will not affect front-line services and it won't affect our staff's ability to do the work and do it in a safe manner, to ensure that they're protected and that they have all of the resources available to them to do the work.

I know each and every year it gets more difficult for them. Individuals have the ability to get deeper and deeper into the forest with quads and other vehicles, and it becomes more challenging for our staff to do their jobs. So, you know, we want to make sure that we are able to have enough staff to ensure that they can, you know, protect the environment, protect the people of Manitoba and ensure that they are doing it in a manner which keeps them safe. So, you know, we have found efficiencies and we are not—haven't eliminated 100 positions or reduced the government—or the budget by \$17 million like previous governments. So, you know, I think that we're doing a good job with the increase of 2.5 per cent to the budget for Sustainable Development.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, doing some very quick math on my own, looks like 12 per cent times 1,124 FTEs comes out to about 135 vacant positions in the

department right now. Can the minister indicate how many of those are currently posted for rehiring?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I know that within our department, you know, our staff has done a great job. And, obviously, it's a department that our government is very concerned with and ensuring that we get it right. As I said before, with this department, there's no second chance.

\* (15:30)

If we let something get away with that, you know, with us—without monitoring, you know, our water supply, monitoring things like zebra mussels, you know, we want to prevent the increase or the further movement of those species into our waters. So, you know, we found extra money for zebra mussels—as I said, I think we're up to \$680,000 this year in our budget, and five decontamination units. We now have the ability to actually enforce, you know, the vehicles that are stopped at certain access centre—or, access locations.

So we're doing our job. We're working, you know, to ensure that Manitobans are protected. We've increased our salary budgets by under \$1.5 million to account for general salary increases which relate to the new collective agreement that was signed, I believe, last year some time by the previous government. And this accounts for the increases to civil servant salaries that you see reflected in the book for 2016 and '17. And we've also increased salary lines by a total of \$926,000 to account for normal salary adjustments, which occur based on staff moving up from the pay grades.

So, you know, we've done a lot within the department within a short time, and I think that Manitobans appreciate the job that we're doing to ensure that our natural resources in our environment is protected and will remain sustainable well into the future.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I can appreciate that providing the details on where 135 vacancies might be—across a department of over 1,000 people can be a bit of a challenge.

It is important information, though, for the public to see where, amongst all of these different positions, there are actual staff working, and where there is a vacancy and which jobs are being posted for active rehiring, and which ones are being allowed to lapse. I would be open to the minister's suggestions of how she may want to provide that information. Does she want to just take it under

advisement and provide it at a later date? That would be fine. Or, whatever may work best for her, and her staff.

**Mrs. Cox:** I thank the member opposite for that question.

All of the job opportunities within our department are publicly posted, and would be available on the Government of Manitoba website. And I know that many people who actually access that site for good government jobs. So they are all available there.

You know, we have seen no decreases in front-line services. Those vacancies that you talk about are nothing new within department and, you know, we're doing so many good things within our department. We've ensured that we've increased funding 2.5 per cent. We're going to address climate change. And I know that the member opposite was part of those discussions, and did travel to Paris recently and had the opportunity to participate in those discussions.

And so, you know, we're working hard to ensure that we keep Manitoba safe; we keep our environment safe; and we keep forests, fisheries, hunting—all of those sustainable. So that's our plan to do and we will do that.

From talking to individuals and people within the department, they tell us that within wildfires, things like that, you know, they work hard and they appreciate the—I guess, they appreciate how we feel about the jobs that they do. And, like I said, from talking to those—my son talking to those fire crews recently, they were so eager to be there and so eager to ensure that they protected our forests and ensured that they were able to put the wildfires out. And I can say it was really awe inspiring to see that the cottage, just maybe located here, and I can actually say, 15 feet away, large trees were burned and brown. And they protected that cottage.

So I think that, in light of all of that, our staff are doing an amazing job, and I'd like to say thank you to each and every one of them for the great work that they do in all of the departments. I know that it's not an easy department, and it's one that's—they do because they really care about Manitoba. So thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** How many vacancies are there currently in the Parks and Regional Services section of the department?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that.

Well, again, you know, I'd just like to touch on the great job that that area of our department does each and every day, Parks and Regional Services.

I know I had the opportunity to visit with many members from the different regions just a few weeks ago and just to listen to them and just to listen to their enthusiasm when they're talking about what they do out there and each and every day—and that the hard work and the protective services that they give to the people of Manitoba, but also ensuring the sustainability of our wildlife and our forest fires and all of that.

And so, you know, to each and every one of them, they do an important job in protecting our environment and protecting our province, and each and every one of them have indicated that, in different regions, there are different issues. So, you know, that in itself is a huge—I guess, it's a hard area to get a hold of unless you're actually—or to understand unless you're actually out there in the field in those different areas.

They all have, as I said, different issues, but, you know, in Parks and Regional Services many things that they do. I mean, they implement the forest-fire prevention, detection, suppression, and pre-suppression, post-suppression of forest fires or wildfires. They work together with other provinces and states and, you know, we saw that recently with the wildfires that we had by Caddy Lake and Nora Lake, and, working together, we were able to suppress those fires rather quickly, ensure that there were no losses of cottages at all, which in itself was an amazing feat when you consider the size of the fires and how rapidly they spread, you know, within the forest. So, huge job that they do in suppressing wildfires and forest fire—and forest protection, not only fires.

\* (15:40)

But they also operate and maintain and develop our provincial parks, and our provincial parks are probably, you know, something that is idolized by other provinces. I mean, you look at what we've got in Manitoba, and compared to some other provinces, I mean, we are so fortunate that we have parks that are so beautiful and places that you want to go walking through.

I know my family and I have walked through, I think—is it bear trail? Yes. *[interjection]* Bear Lake Trail, at—just off the 44. It's amazing, you know, to walk through that trail and, you know, we had three

young children, and—three sons, and they all, you know, walked through that bog, through the mud. But, you know, determination prevailed and we made sure that we got to the end of it. And, you know, we were able to get back and just—we still talk about it to this day, you know, what an amazing opportunity that was to be out in middle of nature, the forest, and enjoy that pristine water as well. So, you know, that in itself is amazing and it's something that I think we should be proud of within our parks branch, so.

But, with regard back to your question, you know, vacancies are nothing new. As I said, there were—I believe it was a hundred positions that were eliminated under the previous government, eliminated from the department because of reductions to the budget allotment, and those must have had a real impact, and I'm sure they did, as I said earlier.

You know, budget pressures from the past resulted in some of these vacancies and have continued on. But vacancies occur naturally, often when people retire or move on to other jobs. I know that in talking to people from conservation and parks, they tell us that quite often the conservation officers start out in Manitoba and learn all what's required to be a conservation officer, and then they move on to the—with the federal government, because of—you know, to go and have the opportunity to work in Canmore or Banff National Park or something like that. So, you know, there are reasons for these vacancies, and it's nothing new. It's just something that has occurred and has occurred in the past, but it hasn't impacted our front-line services, so.

Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** The minister came close to answering my question there towards the end but then skated off the runway. I mean, I—having worked in the minister's office, I mean, there is a dynamic at play here. I don't understand, though, what the problem the minister is having, nothing about the staff. I don't know why just sharing the number publicly of the number of vacancies within one section of her department is a difficulty.

When we were in government and the roles were reversed, and her party was in opposition, an answer like that would quite often just result in a FIPPA request ending up in the minister's desk, and then the department staff have to go and do a whole bunch of work which takes them away from what you and I agree are also priorities, that front-line work, moving

Manitoba forward, whatever language you want to use. And, a refusal to answer a very simple question right now, which should be easy to put on the public record, is just going to potentially increase that busywork which is completely unnecessary.

So, I'm wondering why it's unreasonable for the public to know, of all the staff positions that the minister has indicated exist, why she won't tell the public which ones of those actually aren't filled right now in her department. And could I please get those numbers?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. Yes, I know that you have been involved, for many years, with climate change and with the department. Formerly, you were the legislative assistant, so you know that part of the process. And, you know, it's nothing new. There are, you know, no, I guess—what's the word for it?—no front-line services that have been cut as a result of that. And, yes, thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** If there's no front-line services that have been cut, why can't the minister just indicate which positions are vacant, then? What is there to hide?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I'd like to thank the member for that question. Of course, all of the information with regard to vacancies and number of staff—*[interjection]*—yes, or the number of positions are indicated in the supplementary information. And, you know, I think that if you're looking for positions that are available currently, you could find those on the website, because they are available there. So, yes, I think that being involved in this, previously, you probably have a good handle of what type of positions may be reflected in here. Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Yes, the number of positions is provided in the Estimates book—same as it is every year. And, yes, the positions that are publicly being hired, posted right now, are also posted—same as in every year. Is the minister saying that all 135 FTE equivalent positions in her department are currently posted?

\* (15:50)

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, there are—all of the positions will be posted, and—all positions, I should say, are posted on the website that are currently available. Some will be posted. I mean, we have to prioritize the different positions. Lots of seasonal staff that we have, as you know, within our department just based on the fact of people who go out there and fight wildfires, things like that. And so there is a high staff turnover as

well. It's a dynamic type of a situation with regard to our department, and especially in the parks department.

Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** The fact that there might be seasonal work does not relate at all to the nature of my question.

The minister has told the public, through her document, that there are over 1,100 full-time equivalent positions in her department. Who fills those positions is one issue. Whether anyone is filling the issues right now is the question I'm getting to. And, for some reason, the minister seems reticent to provide the public through this process with the number of positions that are currently vacant in just one section of her department.

I'll ask one more time. We can go the FIPPA route, which is not exactly the hallmark of a government claiming to be more efficient or transparent or accountable. We'll end up in the same place. I'll have the information I'm asking for, but you'll have made all of your staff spend many hours doing extra work. I don't understand the reticence of the minister to just answer the question.

So, one more time: Can she please take under advisement and agree to provide, later, a breakdown of the number of vacancies in her department and where those are?

**Mrs. Cox:** The member opposite was at the table previously and so is aware of the positions and the dynamic situation with regard to our department of parks. Balancing the need to fill the jobs and manage the budget are—go hand-in-hand. So there is a balance.

It's nothing new and we have invested new dollars within our department—2.5 per cent. Unlike the government before, we have not cut 100 positions. So the department, you know, is functioning right now to ensure that vacancies are posted. We've done that online, just like we have in the previous situations. But vacancies do occur naturally when people retire or find other jobs. That's nothing new than what occurs in most departments. No one has been laid off, yes, within our department, and we have just found efficiencies to do things better within our department.

Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, we'll just have to see where that paper trail leads us, then, shall we?

What issues are currently under review by the Clean Environment Commission?

**Mrs. Cox:** We haven't mandated the Clean Environment Commission to do anything new yet. I know that there is a regional cumulative effect study, which is looking at the transmission line from Minnesota to Manitoba.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So that's the only active file that the government has asked the CEC to be working on right now, or are there others? Outstanding reports, anything we're waiting on?

**Mrs. Cox:** I stand to be corrected. We did not ask for the regional cumulative effect study. I think that was done by your government, and, currently, they are looking at the south end plant, the water and waste treatment plant, City of Winnipeg. The—doing some work on contaminated sites, and that's it.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Are any of those investigations ones that she has initiated or that her government has initiated since coming into office, or are all three of those carry-overs from the previous government?

**Mrs. Cox:** They're all carry-overs.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Thank you for that. What projects will the minister be asking the IISD to pursue this year?

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, thank you for that question. We have met with Scott Vaughan and had a good initial meeting. You know, I think that we plan to bring them in to discuss water management, climate change, things of those natures. You know, I know that they are world class, do world-class research in science and innovation and, you know, originated here in the heart of Manitoba, in Winnipeg. So, very proud of the fact that they did originate here; have had other discussions with them. Actually, just today, as a matter of fact, we met with another individual from Ottawa, and good discussion.

\* (16:00)

You know, I think that they just bring such a wealth of information and, obviously, they've done so much research and have the ability to probably provide us with a lot of information and advice that we could, in fact, certainly use with regard to all of these different areas that we're going to be examining as part of this government and our new mandate. So, look forward to working with ISD and having input from them on a lot of these very important issues.

And, you know, as we often say, why reinvent the wheel when somebody has already developed such great programs and developed such great studies and can provide us with so much knowledge that we are just really pleased to draw on their world-class expertise.

I am going to the dinner this evening and will have the opportunity to have more discussions with them and just really actually thrilled to do that. The expertise and the information that they bring to the table is just second to none, and we are so fortunate to have them as part of our discussion groups and part of our groups as we move forward with these new and exciting projects and plans, made-in-Manitoba plans.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Will the minister be keeping the round table?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thanks for that question. *[interjection]* No, thanks for the question. I know. I do have the report in front of me, and so I have read it, and we've talked about it. And, of course, it's one of those areas, just like many other projects, or whatever legislation that new governments look at, and we'll have to make those decisions down the road. I think that's something that we need to see how effective it is.

And from looking at the 2014-15—I guess it was the annual report—I do see some of the duties, the powers of the round table, the members. And I believe you're a member of the round table, are you? *[interjection]* Yes, exactly. I did read your bio and the information. And I read with, yes, with interest with regard to the members on the round table, the meetings that you had—I believe there was one in May of 2014 and January 2015—and the award process that took place. And look forward to continuing that award process because I think it's very good for individuals, organizations, to—and to encourage them to embrace sustainability. So I think that's important, something that we will do.

But, you know, like we've talked about and I've said to you earlier today, we want to ensure that we do consult with people and that we give the Manitobans the opportunity to talk to us. And we will listen to them, and we want to be inclusive. So, with regard to this department, we are going to examine it and determine whether or not that's a program that we will move forward to, and perhaps we will in certain areas. I'm not quite sure yet. But I can't give you a straight, you know, answer on this right now. I think that it's, like governments have

done before—I know that there's programs that were in Family Services before: the Women and Infant Nutrition program, it was called the WIN program, and it was an excellent program for providing young moms with very new babies the opportunity to learn how to parent, prepare meals and do things like that, so. And, unfortunately, I don't think that program is around anymore. So I think that's something that governments do on a regular basis is they re-examine what's currently there and they re-examine if—what's working and what's not, and maybe expanding on those things that they feel they could do better on and just moving forward with, you know, as we call it, made-in-Manitoba plans.

So, with regard to the round table, I think that that's up for discussion, and we want to review it, so thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So did I hear the minister right? She's going to review whether the round table exists, but she wants to keep the round table's awards ceremony? I'm not quite sure how that would work.

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question.

I think that, as I said, you know, there's always bits and pieces of legislation, bits and pieces of different organizations and, you know, in this case, the round table, that, you know, we may want to continue, maybe not in this format but, you know, in some format.

We're a new government, seven weeks in as a new minister, and I think we want to be inclusive and talk to Manitobans and listen to what the best way is of actually listening to Manitobans and engaging them in that process.

So as we move forward, we will have opportunities to engage Manitobans and listen to them with regard to this type of round table and, you know, as well with other types of projects that we currently have within department.

So, you know, there's lots of, I guess, projects and legislation and, you know, other areas that may be up for discussion.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Oh, speaking of legislation, I've got that on my list too.

Will the minister be reintroducing The Surface Water Management Act?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question.

You know, obviously, watershed-based planning is an important issue. I know it's an issue that we

have been, in our home, believe it or not—I know it's kind of something dry that you wouldn't expect to discuss in a home, but we've got two sons that are—have environmental degrees, so it is an issue that comes up quite often.

And it gives me a chance to speak to our commitment to implement new watershed-based planning for drainage and water resource management, with a goal, as indicated in my mandate letter, of no net loss of water retention capacity in watersheds. Our goal is no net loss, as I just said, of water retention capacity in Manitoba watersheds.

And as with, you know, other governments do, federal, provincial, you know, there's an interest to look at that, for sure, and determine whether or not we will keep the entire bill as you had it, Bill 5, I think it is, was it, that was what you were bringing forward, or we will revise it to something that is maybe more of a made-in-Manitoba plan.

But I think that we need to discuss that with other stakeholders. I know we've met with conservation districts and ISD and, you know, talked about the need to ensure that we move water safely and ensure that water isn't moved when it shouldn't be moved.

But we will engage stakeholders in the development and implementation and we will ensure that there's effective surface water management because we know it's essential to reducing the cost of flooding, holding back water that can be used in droughts and removing excess nutrients that cause harmful algae as in our waters that we see today.

\* (16:10)

So I know that you worked hard on that bill and I know that there were many consultations with stakeholders. And so, you know, we will look at it, and I know that you said, in the House, that—what did you say? That it was a very good piece of legislation. And I understand that, and it's unfortunate that maybe perhaps after all of those stakeholders who participated, weren't able to see it come to be debated and passed in the Legislature.

But, you know, we will look at it and, as I said, we—as a lot of new governments do, we'll base our decisions on talking to stakeholders. So thank you for that.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, it is a very good piece of legislation, and I'm encouraged to hear the minister

has it on her radar. She doesn't need to worry about reinventing the wheel, as she said earlier. If she's looking for a made-in-Manitoba approach to that issue, she's actually sitting next to the people who helped, in very big ways, craft that legislation. And, far as I know, they're all Manitobans.

So I think we had agreement from more parties than usual—shall I put it?—prior to the writ being dropped and the election started on that particular piece of legislation. And I would encourage the minister to, certainly, continue to work with her staff and others to bring it forward as soon as possible. And that's my next question.

Can the minister give us a timeline of when she hopes to bring The Surface Water Management Act back to the House?

*Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. And, you know, being a government—I guess, we were elected, I think it's nine weeks ago, so, seven weeks as a minister. I think that, you know, we do want to move forward with good legislation, and so we're not going to rush it. We're—have over the summer, I think, once the—after House adjourns, we're going to start looking at the legislation, looking at the surface 'waterment'—water—surface watershed management, Bill 5, that you had initially worked on. And, you know, develop some—like I say, not reinvent the wheel, but develop a piece of legislation that is based on what's important to Manitobans and consulting with them.

I know that you did a great job in talking to stakeholders, and the staff were excellent in doing that. But, you know, we've got a lot of work to do, as indicated in my mandate letter. And I think that we want to make sure that we get it right. So we don't want to have to start on something and then re-examine it in a year or so later. So we're going to work together with those stakeholders that I mentioned earlier and ensure that we do get it right.

And the bill that you have presented to us before, I think, is a good piece of information. And, like you said, it's a good starting point. And, hopefully, we can elaborate on it and make it even better. So thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'd encourage the minister to recognize that, as indicated by the fact that there was broad support in the House for the legislation, stakeholders were consulted. They were very, very disappointed when that particular

piece of legislation didn't get the opportunity to be passed. I don't think she's going to get radically different feedback from said stakeholders.

Could she please commit to reintroducing that legislation, obviously, not this summer, but in one of the fall sessions?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. And, as I indicated, you know, we have over the summer months, just being a new government, we want to ensure that we get it right and, you know, make it even better. So we are going to work over the summer months to ensure that that surface water management piece of legislation is developed in consultation with Manitoba stakeholders and Manitobans and make sure that, perhaps, we can even make it better.

I know that—I'm looking at, I guess, the discussions that you did have with regard to Bill 5, and it looks like you had many of them. But, you know, ALUS is also an important part of that bill, and we're going to work with the Department of Agriculture to ensure that that's a component of it. And I think that we've seen a lot of good things with the ALUS program. I know I've seen different—read reports and seen videos, things like that, of the success that they've had with ALUS. So I think that that needs to be a major component within that piece of legislation.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** The minister speaks of improving on the bill as it was originally presented. What flaws does she see in it that need to be improved?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I know that, you know, there was a consultation process that you took, but, you know, I think that, like all governments, we like to hear first-hand from those individuals and make them part of this process and this bill that we plan to introduce.

So that's something that we will do. We will have those discussions and consultations with those individuals over the summer months. And, you know, I think that it's a lesson learned that it's important that you consult with Manitobans. I think that, you know, again, going back to what happened on April the 19th, I think the failure to consult with Manitobans was quite significant. And, you know, especially with the implementation of the PST and failure to consult with Manitobans, we saw the impact of that.

And, so, you know, we want to make sure that we are a government that includes those stakeholders, and that we have the opportunity to

discuss with them, to develop a piece of legislation that we feel is the best it can be.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** It's an interesting answer, Mr. Deputy Chair, because, if I'm not mistaken—and Hansard will tell me if I'm right or wrong on this—I think, in a previous answer, the minister acknowledged that our government had done, really, quite an extensive round of consultation preparing The Surface Water Management Act.

So, if the minister doesn't have any problems with the existing act, and she knows that extensive consultations happened already, I'm not sure what the delay would be in reintroducing what her party and ours agreed was a good piece of legislation.

Are there additional stakeholders? Like, who else does the minister need to talk to before she'll have a comfort level bringing this back to the House, this very crucial piece of legislation?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I know that there are certain components of the legislation that could be changed, that we need to, you know, include, you know, our made-in-Manitoba aspect of that piece of legislation. And I know that we did ask to have that bill debated and, unfortunately, it didn't occur.

So we need to examine it. I have a mandate letter from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and—with all of the stipulations of what he's asked me to do. And I need to make sure that, before we develop any piece of legislation, that that legislation includes all of those bullets within my mandate letter. And I think it's important that I do that. It's my responsibility as the minister, and it's my responsibility to the people of Manitoba, to the people in agriculture and, you know, people from Ducks Unlimited, people from ISD, people that have talked to you but, you know, sometimes Manitobans like to have the opportunity to actually be a part of that and speak to this government with regard to what they feel should be included in that piece of legislation.

So I think that, as this government is a new government, it's our responsibility to include others in these discussions. And who those other people, you know, might be, as I said—you know, Ducks Unlimited and people from agriculture, I mean, you know, indigenous people. There's lots of consultations, I think, that we can do and also use the information that you've provided to us. So thank you for that.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I could make the minister's job one bullet point easier. She can just put the checkmark next to surface water management legislation, and that part will be done, and she can move on to other parts of her mandate letter. But we'll keep a close eye out for the timelines on that. Rest assured we will be watching that closely.

On a different piece of legislation, which also died, and we can debate why various acts came forward for debate and other ones did not. I don't feel the need to get overly partisan in Estimates on that front, but another very good piece of legislation that our government brought forward was The Environmental Rights Act. Will the minister be bringing that back to the House for discussion in the fall?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question, and thanks for that word of advice that you gave me earlier with regard to Bill 5, appreciate it.

Anyways, with regard to your most recent question, I mean, I know that the Premier has given me a very broad range of tasks to complete, and, you know, most of them will or do have an impact on the environment, and I think that we need to review that, and based on what has—what will transpire within the mandate letter and our accomplishments, I think that we will make significant improvements to ensure that Manitoba's environment is going to be preserved and safe and have long-term sustainability.

As I said earlier, you know, the environment, you don't get a second chance when you're dealing with the issues that we are in this department. It's so important. So I think that, you know, based on the information in my mandate letter, talking to stakeholders and other individuals, we are going to ensure that we do protect the environment and continue on with that strategy. I mean, what it'll look like? You know, I don't know. I think that once we achieve these, we will be looking at maybe developing some type of broad piece of legislation that talks about protecting the environment, specifically, but I think all of these are components of it. So, thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, again, I'm happy to help the minister with her job, and if she's looking to improve the environment here in Manitoba, reintroducing The Environmental Rights Act, which enshrines such things for individual Manitobans as the right to safe water, clean air. That would seem to fit right in with both the content and the tone and theme of her

mandate letter. Will—I'm wondering what the stumbling block might be in enshrining Manitobans' rights to a clean environment in law as our government had proposed to do.

*Mrs. Sarah Guillemard, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mrs. Cox:** Thanks again for your offer, appreciate it.

You know, again, seven weeks into my mandate as the minister, and I think that, you know, we need to, you know, listen to Manitobans and consult, and, you know, maybe legislation will be part of that or maybe we can, you know, ensure that we meet all of these targets and mandates without it. But, you know, I think that first and foremost is ensuring that Manitobans are protected with regard to their water, their wildlife, the forestry, things like that. I mean, it's too sensitive an issue to not take with the amount of seriousness that it really deserves.

We do want to talk to others and, you know, like I said, to ISD and other institutes and other stakeholders that can provide us with that information. And I think that I would be remiss if I didn't allow that to happen and allow us to talk to other individuals and get the best advice and work with the department and work with others to ensure that Manitobans are protected and their water supply is protected and our air quality is protected. And it's a huge responsibility, but one that I know the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) tasked to me, and it's one that we're going to work very hard to ensure that we meet the conditions of the mandate letter and that we do protect Manitoba.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Shifting gears ever so slightly over to climate change: I note, on page 72, the very first objective listed for the minister in that section of her Estimates book is to achieve Reduced greenhouse gas emissions. How does the minister plan to achieve that goal?

**Mrs. Cox:** I'd like to thank the member for that question. Obviously, it's a very important question. It's a global, national and provincial, you know, concern. So it gives me the opportunity to speak to our commitment, our government's commitment to find the right balance between allowing economic activity and providing the environment, including our goal to—protecting our environment, sorry, and including our goal to create a made-in-Manitoba climate action plan.

I think that's something that's important. We're going to develop a plan that works for all

Manitobans, and we will consult on issues such as carbon pricing, mitigation, adaptation and green technology, which can reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, keep investment in Manitoba and stimulate innovation. Our plan will create new jobs and businesses and help us deliver on our commitment to be the most improved province in job creation, as well as most improved in partnerships with businesses and communities.

Sorry, getting a dry mouth from all this talking. Do you mind if I just take a sip of water? *[interjection]* Thank you.

So, as part of—let me see—my government will look at opportunities to reduce emissions from commercial buildings through building codes and will support new efforts to increase energy efficiency. In partnership with the private sector, we will examine fuel-saving technology and other measures to reduce emissions within the transportation sector. And I will be listening to Manitobans and including all stakeholders as we develop our made-in-Manitoba climate action plan.

All parts of society have important roles to play in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, and we are collaborating with the federal, provincial and territorial counterparts to develop national actions to address climate change. All of us must do our part and—to ensure that the international commitments and be a positive voice at the table, which is reflective of Manitoba's historical role.

The Province is pleased to participate in discussions with our national partners to develop a new pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. And I'm happy to say that I did have the opportunity to speak to Minister McKenna again yesterday and talk a little bit about climate action plan. And—yes, and I'm aware that—I suppose that you were also involved, the member opposite, with regard to—tasked with greening the legislative initiative. So I read that with interest, and I was just wondering at—if you want to share with us what those initiatives were and what you were able to achieve as that—in that role.

And I read what Gord Mackintosh—he said the building's an old building, but it's not a clunker. So I really appreciated that statement. And, if you'd like to share that with me, I'd love to hear from you about that. Thank you.

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Certainly, I'd be happy to share that at some time. Gord was never short on very snappy ways to summarize complex situations, and that would be a good example. We are, of course, living in a rather historic building that's approaching its 100 year anniversary and a lot of good work has been put into it and a lot of good work's going to be needed to put into it.

So, yes, I was very happy to play a small role along the way, working with lots of great people, so I'll share those thoughts at another time perhaps.

But, yes, just back to climate change, the minister has referenced the importance of climate change. There was an interesting curveball that was thrown into the mix when it seemed that her Premier (Mr. Pallister) did not want to acknowledge that human activity is, in fact, the primary cause of the runaway climate change that we are on the cusp of experiencing.

Is it her position that human activity is the primary cause of the climate change and global warming that we are now seeing?

**Mrs. Cox:** Anyways, I've, you know, been doing some reading with regard to climate change and the environment, and this specific book *Visualizing the Environment*, which is a National Geographic and it's been written by many of our Manitoba professors, and just reading from that, where it talks about their definition of climate change, and weather and climate are driven by the energy of the sun which heats the earth unevenly, then through a system of interactions with the atmosphere the lithosphere, the hydrosphere and the biosphere; this heat is redistributed around the globe, and weather includes not only temperature but winds, atmospheric pressure, humidity and precipitation that change over time to influence the conditions we experience today, next week, next year or in the future.

Change that occurs in the weather over long periods of time, such as from one century to another or between hundreds of thousands of years is called climate change, and changes in climate that have been taking place during the earth's history have included natural events, continual continental drift, solar radiation, earth's orbit and volcanic emissions. But more recently humans have affected the climate system as well by enhancing the concentration.

So, you know, I think, from reading this, there's a number of different reasons for the climate change that we see today.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Based on the minister's extensive research in the textbook there from the university or— which of those features is—which of those factors is the largest, in her opinion?

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, I mean, you know, there are many reasons for climate change and I think that, you know, each and every one of us know that regardless of how you got here to work today, even the— whether it was the runners that you wore walking to work here or the bicycle or your vehicle or whether it was taking the bus, all of it contributes to climate change. And I think that what we have to do as a government is move forward to address those—the impacts of climate change, and that's what we plan to do is we plan to work together to address climate change.

I mean, I think that we've seen some significant changes within our—within the world, with—over the hundreds and hundreds of years, and we will—this government will ensure that we address climate change and that we develop a made-in-Manitoba plan.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** If the minister would please refer back to the textbook that she was citing previously, all of the examples of how climate can be impacted, how many of those does her government have the capacity to do something about?

**Mrs. Cox:** As the member opposite knows and as I've said earlier, climate change is a global issue. It's a national issue and a provincial issue. So we all have to do our part. And that's what we're going to do as a responsible government is we're going to work together, consult with Manitobans and develop an action plan that works and reflects the need to address climate change.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I hear the minister when she says she wants to do her part or address climate change. The worrisome bit, though, is if the minister doesn't understand the nature of climate change and the realistic options that she has to work with, this could have a very significant impact on the government, this department's budget, the rest of it.

Is the minister trying to suggest that she has the capacity to change continental drift, which was one of the reasons she listed earlier?

**Mrs. Cox:** You know, I think that we are going to be responsible. And, you know, I—dealing with climate change, it's a global issue. And, you know, it's important that we protect and preserve our natural resources and wildlife and ensure that our children

have the ability to enjoy the same resources that we do. Climate change is a broad issue, and it's something that we will carefully examine and ensure that we engage stakeholders and all Manitobans and work towards a made-in-Manitoba plan.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Is the minister going to attempt to change the amount of solar radiation coming from the sun as part of her climate change action plan?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I think if anybody could do that, they'd be a very wealthy individual, but, you know, obviously, I think that, you know, we're talking reality. And we do plan to work together with Manitobans and develop a plan in consultation with Manitobans and other provinces to address this important issue, just as the government previous has done or attempted to do.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So the minister's plan will attempt to be realistic. I'm just trying to understand her starting point, Madam Chair. I don't quite understand the connection between reading from the textbook of what can impact the climate versus the rather simple question of what is realistic, what does this government have the potential to have the—have impacts on. So I'll come back to my original question as I try to understand the minister's starting point. Is changing human activity something that needs to happen, in the minister's view, in order to address climate change?

**Mrs. Cox:** You know, I think that there's many things that contribute to climate change, and I'm sure that the member opposite would agree with that. I know that the member opposite was tasked with, you know, reducing the amount of waste sent to the landfill. I mean, our landfills, unfortunately, do emit a lot of greenhouse gases. So, I mean, there are many different reasons for climate change, and, you know, we'll work towards addressing lowering greenhouse gases in Manitoba.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** If there's many different causes of climate change emissions, and the minister isn't quite prepared to admit that human activity is a part of that, why is she bringing forward a plan?

\* (16:40)

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I think that, you know, I think there's—it's unanimous. I mean, you know, globally, as I said, nationally, provincially, you know, we need to address the issue of climate change. And it's an issue that is not going to go away, and it's an issue that we have to work on to ensure that our families, our children, our grandchildren down the road have

the opportunity to enjoy the same—what's the word?—the same—well, forestry, wildlife—all of that that we currently do to ensure that agriculture and all of that continues. And so we have to do our part.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Is the minister familiar with the repeated conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and what that group of only a few thousand scientists around the world have said, over multiple years, as to what the single greatest contributing factor to climate change actually is—speaking of a, you know, unanimous or broad-based opinion in the world?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I don't think it's—you know, it's wrong to say that, of course, humans contribute to climate change. I mean, but there's many other reasons for it as well. We've seen that over a period of time. We are going to take action as a responsible government, and we said that right in our campaign promise and within the mandate letter, that we will do that. And I know that we want to reduce greenhouse gasses in Manitoba and we want to do our part.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So the minister disagrees with the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that human activity is the single largest contributing factor to climate change. Is that correct?

**Mrs. Cox:** I know that scientists continue to debate that and we will do our part to address climate change. I mean, yes, definitely man has an impact on climate change and the industrially—the industrial activities that have taken place within the country and the world, obviously, and—but, in Manitoba, here we will work together with—on a global basis as well as a national basis to address climate change.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, this has been fun. We'll return to the topic at hand at a later date. But I do want to cede the floor to the MLA for River Heights who also deserves some time to ask questions of the minister.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, I'd like to start by getting an understanding of the minister's approach to fisheries, fishery science and certification of the lakes. I presume that when the mandate talks about certification, that's eco-certification. But maybe it's some other type of certification.

The minister, I believe, is aware that there has been major problems for many, many years with the fishery on Lake Winnipegosis and to the extent that a

report last year talked about the terrible state of the pickerel fishery on Lake Winnipegosis. There have been significant cutbacks over the last several years in terms of fishery science, so I ask the minister what her plans are with respect to Lake Winnipegosis eco-certification and fishery science.

**Mrs. Cox:** I'd like to thank the member for the question. Our government plans to develop and implement a credible strategy to secure certification of Manitoba's commercial fisheries. It is a priority of this government to support and promote fishing in Manitoba. As such, our department is developing a credible strategy to secure certification of Manitoba's commercial fisheries. And this will support a sustainable fishing industry for years to come.

As you know, fishing supports local economies and brings tourists to our province and we are committed to working in partnership with fishers to ensure the harvests are sustainable. We will provide the best possible income for fishers today while sustaining fish populations for future generations.

And certification cannot simply be imposed as a one-size-fits-all. We're committed to working with communities to ensure that our strategy is built on the vast knowledge of fishers who have been on the lake for many years. It's founded in credible science and grows the fishery-based economy that fits with unique community needs, as well as overall goals at the province.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Okay. One of the important activities of the department is consultation with Aboriginal people, indigenous communities. What is the—can the minister describe, you know, her approach and what is the—tell us what the budget will be for doing those consultations.

**Mrs. Cox:** I'd like to thank the member for that question. You know, the indigenous people are a critical part of those discussions and they will most definitely be at the table.

I know that our government is one of inclusiveness and we plan to listen to all Manitobans and Manitoba fishers, and with that said, it's important that we listen to Manitoba fishers and all other individuals who partake in fishing and any stakeholders that will be impacted by these decisions.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I'd asked the minister if she has a protocol, or a—that exists already for conducting consultations with Aboriginal people, and if she does, whether she would table it.

\* (16:50)

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question.

I understand that staff are there on a regular basis, consulting and talking to fishers and indigenous people. There is a formal process to engage those individuals. And it's our legal and ethical requirement and mandate to do that.

So, thank you for that question.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I would ask, since the minister has a formal protocol, if that would be possible, if not to table it today but to provide it in the future?

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, we certainly can provide that to you.

**Mr. Gerrard:** On the east side of Lake Winnipeg, where there is the potential World Heritage Site, and it's an area where there still needs to be considerable land-use planning, I would ask the minister whether she could tell us what the plans are (a) with respect to the World Heritage Site, and (b) with respect to the land-use planning. And what sort of staff and resources will be available?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, our government is working in partnership with the governments of Ontario, Canada and First Nations communities to nominate a 33,400-kilometre boreal forest cultural landscape to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage list. The nomination has been evaluated, as you know, by UNESCO's advisers and is recommended for inscription on the World Heritage Site.

And we are interested ensuring that Manitoba has the right balance between environmental protection and economy—economic opportunity. So we're developing a framework to reconcile the needs of industry and rural and northern communities while continuing to enhance the network of protected areas in our natural regions.

This government supports the nomination. However, we are also committed to review the Bipole III project, including its location. And we have notified the other partners in the UNESCO project that a review is being undertaken.

Canada, as the state party to the World Heritage Convention, and ultimately responsible for the nomination, has been contacted by Manitoba Crown Services regarding the Bipole III review, and Canada will advise UNESCO and UNESCO's advisers of the review and will share information on the schedule and process as the information becomes available.

We understand that the World Heritage Committee will make a decision on the Pimachiowin Aki nomination in July 2016 at its 40th session.

**Mr. Gerrard:** In terms of the land-use planning, which I understand is ongoing on the east side, on page 115 and 116 of the Estimates book, there is a section on watershed and land-use planning.

And my question would be: Would the funding and the personnel associated with land-use planning on the east side of Lake Winnipeg fall under this category? And, if so, approximately what proportion of that budget and personnel would go toward the land-use planning on the east side?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question, and the information is contained on page 38. And the amount is approximately \$447,000.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Okay. I would ask the minister: What would be the minister's target for reducing greenhouse gases? How much and over what time?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. As you know, we're just seven weeks in, in this ministry, as the Minister of Sustainable Development. So we are going to be, you know, talking about those, consulting with others and Manitobans in finding out what those targets are. We plan to consult with individuals over the summer and perhaps be able to come up with something by the fall.

But we believe in action over targets, and we will develop that made-in-Manitoba plan. Thank you.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I look forward to hearing those numbers.

I think the MLA—[interjection] Yes, I look forward to, then, to hearing those details in the fall when the minister's ready to share those.

I would ask what the timeline is for the process for eco-certification of the major lakes, and which of the three lakes would be approached first?

\* (17:00)

**Mrs. Cox:** I'd like to thank the member for that question. It is going to be a very comprehensive review. It was part of my mandate letter, so it's something that we want to work on very quickly. We'd like to have it done sooner rather than later, and we have directed our staff to start working on a process for that, and also have talked to my legislative assistant and the member from Swan River. And he's actually going to be working on that project as well with us. And, hopefully, we'll have

some other MLAs, from that area, that will be able to work with that member and ensure that we can go out and start discussions and work together with indigenous fishers and all fishers to reach those—that target and have that review in place sooner rather than later.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I'll turn it back over to the MLA for Wolseley.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Feels like I never left.

Thanks to the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). I'm glad he had a chance to ask some important questions as well.

I just—I feel compelled to go back to the—this minor little issue of what the causes of climate change are, in the minister's opinion. It is well understood that lots of factors have, are and will contribute to climate change. As I was referencing earlier, I don't think the minister, no matter how powerful she—her belief may be in the mandate letter she received from her Premier (Mr. Pallister), is going to be able to influence things like solar energy from the sun or continental drift or the rest of it.

What we are left with is the fact, scientifically verified by thousands of scientists, that it is human activity that has shifted the balance. And I'm trying to understand why the minister is uncomfortable—

**The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** Order, please.

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

*The committee recessed at 5:03 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 5:14 p.m.*

**The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** I would like to call the Committee of Supply back to order.

This committee will resume with its business where we left off prior to the recess.

I believe the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) was in the middle of providing a question.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Yes, I am trying to honestly understand the minister's reticence to acknowledge

that human activity is the single largest cause contributing to climate change and the warming of global temperatures in the world these days.

Can she explain why she's having trouble agreeing with that understanding?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. And as I've said before, it obviously is a cause to it and, you know, has had an impact on our climate, definitely, but, you know, that we are going to focus on changing what we can and working to address the current problems that we have and developing a made-in-Manitoba plan and work together with the federal government to do that.

So I think that, you know, the issue is the fact that we need to address it, and that's what we plan to do with this government. We plan to have consultations, include stakeholders like ISD and other groups and talk about a plan that will actually make a difference and can reduce greenhouse gases.

I know that in the past, your government had attempted to reduce greenhouse gases and talked about reducing them and you failed to reduce those emissions. And we want to make sure that we succeed. So we are going to do those consultations, develop a plan and work together with Manitobans and listen to Manitobans on that plan and what it will look like.

Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** The truth of the matter is our government managed to dramatically reduce the rate of increase in emissions coming from Manitoba. The average under the Filmon Conservative years was an increase of over 200,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. That was how much our emissions were going up. And under our government, with very little help or engagement from the Harper government, I might point out, we did manage to drop that down to about 60,000 per year increase. So we have reduced the size of the annual problem by about three and a half fold. The minister, however, will get no disagreement from me that further work is required and, indeed, that's why we were continuing to work on climate change on many, many fronts.

I note on page 74 of her department's Estimates, there doesn't appear to be any additional staff or any additional funds for combatting climate change. How does the minister plan on meeting the stated objective on page 72, that she has to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, if she has no more staff or funds to work with?

\*(17:20)

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, thank you for that question. And, you know, it is about developing a plan and not necessarily about adding more money or staff to do that. I think what we need to do is affect behaviour and, you know, work together with industries, agriculture and Manitobans to develop that plan.

I know that the—I don't think that the former government had any new money in their—when they were addressing the climate action plan, so I think what it is, it's about ensuring that we get out there and talk to Manitobans, and we work together with the federal government and all levels of government to address it.

As I said, I know that you went to Paris and were successful in meeting there and having some real engaging discussions with the other ministers and other people responsible for climate change.

So I think with that said, that's what we plan to do is, you know, change in behaviour and try to talk to Manitobans and engage people and involve stakeholders in those discussions.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, let's just establish on the record what the minister's understanding is of the current context then in terms of Manitoba's emissions. What were the emissions in megatons from Manitoba for the most recent year available?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. I've received information that indicates it was 21.5 megatons in 2014.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** And the baseline year that the minister mentioned in her opening statement I believe was 2005. Can she put on the record what her understanding was of our—of Manitoba's emissions in megatons in that year?

**Mrs. Cox:** Sorry, thank you, 20.7. Sorry.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Yes, thank you for that.

So, if the baseline year of 20.7 and the most recent data of 21.5, the minister's target is what again?

**Mrs. Cox:** Clarify the question, please.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Certainly. The minister mentioned she had a target in her opening statement on climate change reductions. I'm just wondering if she would state that for the record of what she's hoping to accomplish—I believe it was by using a baseline of the year 2005—what year is her end goal and what

amount of reductions is she looking at achieving by then?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that. I think that was misinformation or maybe information that wasn't directed correctly. I was reading from information that I read that the previous government had failed to reduce its emissions in its last round of emission targets, with the emissions instead rising. So, for the record, that was not what I had said. Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So next question, then.

What is the minister's goal for reducing emissions?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, as I said earlier, I think that, you know, we need to develop a plan over the summer. And that's what we're going to do is develop a made-in-Manitoba plan.

We're going to consult with stakeholders, engage with Manitobans and look at something that's realistic and feasible.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** The stakeholders the minister's referring to will probably want to know from the minister what she's asking them about.

Are they being asked to contribute ideas for a one-megaton reduction, a 10-megaton reduction? I don't think it's an unreasonable question. Does the minister not have any goal in mind when she's going to engage in these consultations?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question.

And, you know, based on my mandate letter, I've been given the responsibility of addressing, you know, the issues with regard to climate change and developing a plan. And I think that we have to develop the—develop a plan, consult. And, based on those consultations, we will determine what those targets should be.

But, first of all, we want to consult with Manitobans, listen, engage stakeholders and those individuals like ISD who can provide us with sound information.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Will the minister commit to—at a minimum—matching our previous government's most immediate goal, which was a 33 per cent reduction of 2005 emission levels by 2030?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question.

And I appreciate the question. You know, seven weeks in, as I've said before, I think it's unrealistic to

think that, in fact, we would have that plan and those targets in place yet. And, you know what, we will take time over the summer to ensure that we engage stakeholders and come up with a plan; and a plan that is realistic and a plan that will address climate change.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Let me try another approach; perhaps using some of the minister's phrases or language will yield some more progress.

If the phrase most improved province were applied to emissions reductions, what would that mean in terms of results four years from now?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that.

As I said, early into the ministry—seven weeks in. And, you know, we will develop a plan and develop a plan that's based on discussions with stakeholders and Manitobans. And, as you said, we want to be a most improved province and we want to do our part. That's for sure.

So that's what we plan to do, and we do plan to ensure that we have a climate action plan that is made in Manitoba, and based on those discussions with Manitobans.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I fully recognize the minister's new to her role, and I will confess I don't know much about what she did prior to being elected.

There is, in government, a big difference between a goal and a plan. The goal is what you hope to achieve, the plan is how you achieve that goal. So, setting aside the plan, which would be specific initiatives the government might undertake to achieve its goal, I'm just asking—to be perfectly clear—what the minister's goal is.

Right now, most recent data, Manitoba's emitting 21.5 megatons as of 2014. What does the minister want that number to be four years from now? Higher or lower?

\* (17:30)

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, thank you for that question. I mean, you know, our goal is to combat climate change and to act on it and, you know, I think that I appreciate what the member has said, but I think that I would be remiss if I went out there and gave you a number that, you know, was something that was not achievable. So we need to work together to ensure that we figure out what that is, in consultation and discussion with stakeholders.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** If the minister has a sense that there's something that's unachievable, what number would that be?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. I mean that we have seen nationally and other provinces that haven't been successful in meeting our targets, so we will ensure that we do develop a plan and a target that is achievable and that will benefit and address climate change within Manitoba.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Broad question for the minister—I'll just take a step back for a bit: Why are so many people in the world concerned about the rate of net global emissions that are contributing to climate change? Why the urgency?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I'm sure as the member opposite is aware, and I know that you are, I mean, you know, we've seen the effects of climate change across the—globally. And you know, obviously, there's a need to address that and to try and stop any further changes. And we want to do our part and that's what we will do. Just as the government opposite did their part with regard to climate change, we plan to be on board on that and be a part of that process.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Is the minister familiar with the term feedback loop and how that relates to the global challenge we're facing on climate change at this particular moment?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question, and I've got to tell you I require a briefing on that. And what I've heard is that it's a cascading effect, so one changed climate change affects another, so it sort of goes down and affects it in that way. But I will need a briefing. Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** You're in very good hands with the staff you have for that briefing; there's no doubt about that.

The reason why I ask is the minister may also have heard talk—or maybe not—maybe I should just ask this—does the minister understand why limiting world temperature rise to 2°C has been put forward as a necessity?

**Mrs. Cox:** Yes, I understand that it's the tipping point, and once you exceed that, it's hard to go back and make any significant changes, so that's what you're referring to. Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** And how much time does the world have if current emissions were to continue before we hit that tipping point?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. My understanding is that about 2030 is what—is the year that they've identified that we could reach that tipping point, yes.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** And just to clarify, that's based on holding a global temperature rise to about 2°C. Is that correct?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that. Yes, that's what my understanding is, that 2030 is the tipping point and that 2° is the number.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I'll begin this with an acknowledgement. I do understand the minister's only been in her job for a short period of time. She may have also heard that some—many, you could even say, nations, people, organizations, scientists, are, in fact, calling for a global average temperature rise to be limited to one and a half degrees Celsius. I'm wondering if she's familiar with some of the impacts that are feared to happen if we go above 1.5.

**Mrs. Cox:** I understand, and thanks to my staff for that, you're, you know, one hundred per cent correct that they are a great resource for me. And, yes, 1.5 would be the number that we would consider, I guess, with regard to the island nations and the melting and all of the flooding that would occur. So 1.5 would be that target.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** And I'm glad the minister has the opportunity through this process to hear that info. Maybe she heard it before, but she can hear it again. I think we all need to hear that as often as possible. And I will say, having, yes, been following climate change issues for a couple decades myself, when you actually have a chance to sit down at an international summit, such as what happened in Paris and talk to people from the island nations, whether it be the Maldives, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and others, or people who represent indigenous communities that are living in coastal areas around the world who are at threat, it really brings it home.

I mean, we should all be recognizing that the severe weather events that our province has experienced, which our government had to deal with, were in part likely—almost certainly enhanced by climate change factors, whether it's large flood events, other places experiencing droughts and the rest of it. I mean, I remember speaking with one delegate in Paris who said his entire nation, like, his entire country has an evacuation plan to move to another country. And it's just a question of when, not

if, because the oceans are going to swallow his island home.

\* (17:40)

So many would argue that there is a moral compunction on all of us with the capacity to limit emissions to 1.5°, to take action in that direction. Could the minister or her staff indicate how many years we have left of current emissions if we're going to limit world temperature rise to one and a half degrees Celsius?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question. Unfortunately, we don't have that information at the table. I mean, we will have briefings and get that information, but I appreciate that comment that you made and thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I'm glad to have put that on the minister's radar. Will she commit to sharing that information once she is briefed on it?

**Mrs. Cox:** Most definitely.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Much appreciated. I look forward to hearing that.

Under those two different scenarios, of course, there's different amounts of carbon or carbon equivalent that can still be released into the atmosphere to limit global average temperatures to those levels. Could the minister share, let's just say, under the 2°C scenario, how much Manitoba is going to have to—how much more carbon Manitoba can produce and release under its fair share?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thank you for that question, and as I've said before, we are going to consult and develop a plan and develop a reasonable plan in consultation with the stakeholders, with Manitobans and move forward from there. It's an item that was indicated on my mandate letter, and it's important, and we will be working, staff will be working aggressively over the summer, and we can plan to have those discussions and develop a plan and a target. Thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I thank the minister for that. I certainly wish her and her staff the best of luck in those endeavours, and I'll be certainly keeping a close eye on that progress.

If we only have—let's just stick with the 2°C measure, which may well be inappropriate and unsuccessful for millions, tens of millions of people, maybe even more, worldwide. There could be very severe impacts for us here even if we are only successful at a two-degree limit. But let's just take

that. If we have only until 2030 before that continues, does the minister realize that means that the Manitoba economy needs to be carbon neutral in 14 years?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thanks again for that question. And we do, you know, plan to develop a made-in-Manitoba climate action plan that will work in consultation with other stakeholders. You know, I appreciate what you say about climate change and the 2° and all of that and the 2030 target or the 2030 date. And so we're, you know, based on that, we will develop a plan in consultation with Manitobans and, you know, move forward on that over the summer months. So thank you.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** The minister, then, will be coming back to the public with a goal at some point in time.

Can she give us an indication of when the department plans to indicate what their goal will be? And will that goal be based on a 1.5°C or 2°C target?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, thank you for that question.

I mean, we hope to be back by the fall with some information. I mean, we want to develop a plan so that we don't miss targets. We want to achieve any new targets that we are developing and move forward with that. And, you know, that's our hope, to—I know that government staff have been working hard since we became government and know—are aware of our mandate letter. And we will work together to try and achieve a document or finalizing a plan to address climate change in Manitoba.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Under the—I mean, the minister references several times her desire, and I take her sincerity to heart, to do her part, to do their part in the fight against climate change.

What is her fair part going to be to make sure Manitoba does its part to limit global average temperature rise to 2°C by 2030?

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, you know, as you know, Manitoba is about 3 per cent of Canada's emitters. And Canada is about 3 per cent of global. So we will do our part, as well, to educate other countries with regard to addressing climate change and work together with the federal government to achieve those targets.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Does the minister's government have a position on the Energy East Pipeline?

**Mrs. Cox:** Sorry—thank you for that question.

We have applied for intervenor status and understand that Energy East just released a document indicating that we are, on page 71—or the National Energy Board, sorry, released a document indicating that we were or have been accepted and listed as an intervenor in that process. And, based on that, we will have the opportunity to speak to it and allow Manitobans also to provide their comments on Energy East and that pipeline.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Yes, that's good the government's got intervenor status. We had intervenor status before the election. We haven't lost that intervenor status after the election. So that's good to know.

What will the minister be using that intervenor status for? What will she be recommending to the National Energy Board on behalf of Manitobans?

\* (17:50)

**Mrs. Cox:** Well, I mean, obviously, as government, it's important that we protect Manitobans, then we will protect Manitoba's environment, our water, and ensure safety in that method or the plan that they have to move crude oil across Canada. So, you know, it's Manitobans'—it's our—part of our mandate is to ensure safety within the—for Manitobans and preserve and protect our water supply system.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Can the minister share with the committee reasons why she would feel Energy East is a threat to the protection of water, protected areas, the environment, air, posed by the Energy East Pipeline?

**Mrs. Cox:** As with any project within Manitoba, Canada, we have to ensure that we protect the environment, and that's what we plan to do. I know that the government before us, as you indicated that you also—you applied for intervenor status, and so, obviously, you are concerned about ensuring that Manitoba's water supply and Manitoba's environment is protected. And that's what we plan to do.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Will the minister commit to sharing her position on Energy East to the NEB publicly when the time comes?

**Mrs. Cox:** I understand from my deputy minister that all of that information is public.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Good to know.

I'm wondering if the minister, who's a big fan of stakeholder consultations, will be meeting with any stakeholders to help her further refine or amend her government's position on Energy East. If not, where would we find the public document that she is referring to, or is it unchanged from the position that our government had at the NEB?

**Mrs. Cox:** Unchanged.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Is it the minister's intention to change that position to the NEB now that they are the government?

**Mrs. Cox:** So what we will do is ensure that we provide information and add to any document that you initially developed and ensure that we protect Manitobans and protect Manitoba's environment and perhaps enhance that.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I'll make the minister a deal. If I can get an answer to my last question here, and I don't think it's a hard one, we, I think, would be prepared to proceed with concluding the Estimates in her section afterwards.

But, as someone who formerly ran a recycling program, I've got to ask a recycling question. I noticed on page 72 of her Estimates book under the Climate Change and Air Quality branch, one of the expected results is improved waste management practices. I'm wondering what that might be in reference to.

**Mrs. Cox:** I can say that I am a big proponent of recycling, and not part of my mandate letter, but it's definitely something that we plan to encourage and plan to ensure that we motivate more Manitobans to recycle. So that's within my plan and something I'm committed to.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Why, I thank the minister for that answer, and as always with any Estimates section there's always way more questions to be asked and way more answers to be provided than the time can ever properly allow for. But let me just take this opportunity to thank all of the minister's colleagues for sitting through this, and particularly to her staff for their help, and the minister herself and the Chair and everyone else.

It's been a good afternoon and we are prepared to move forward with the resolutions for the department now.

**The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** Seeing no further questions, we will now deal with the resolutions.

Resolution 12.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$70,205,000 for Sustainable Development, Parks and Regional Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,371,000 for Sustainable Development, Environmental Stewardship, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$28,942,000 for Sustainable Development, Water Stewardship and Biodiversity, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,047,000 for Sustainable Development, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 12.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,044,000 for Sustainable Development, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 12.1.(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 15.1.

Resolution—oh, they're already gone. Okay.

Okay, the floor is open for questions. None—okay.

Resolution 12.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,150,000 for Sustainable Development, Finance and Crown Lands, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The time being almost 6 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

## FAMILIES

\* (14:40)

**Madam Chairperson (Colleen Mayer):** 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 Families.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

The member for St. Johns—oh, Honourable Minister.

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** If it's the will of the committee, I did have some follow-up information that was brought forward from yesterday. If it's the will, I could provide that information, or we could do this at the end, whatever is the will of the committee.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I actually prefer just to have it tabled because we don't have much time here, so I'd like to get into some of my other questions. So, if I could just have that information tabled, please.

**Mr. Fielding:** Some of it is verbal and some isn't, so there's certainly things that I can table, which I will.

This, Madam Speaker, is the job descriptions. I'm not going to go through it. It's something that looks like some light bedtime reading here for you, so I'll let you—I'll table that. [*interjection*] Is there three copies?

Just—I'm not going to table this information, but just to let you know what information is there for the member: the Child and Family Services funding guidelines for child maintenance. I do have copies of this; that's a part of it. I also do have the provincially approved placement per diem rates that I can table for this—or, rather, I can share with the member. There's a couple of verbal things which—why don't I let you get into your questions? And then, you know, once you do a few questions, I'll bring the other information here, because some of it's verbal.

So—is that fair?

**Ms. Fontaine:** Miigwech to the minister. I appreciate the information and I appreciate a little bit of flexibility in having that information, so I appreciate that.

So, if I can ask the minister: What is the status of the hotel reduction team?

**Mr. Fielding:** Would it be—well, I know we have a lot of our staff back there, and some are with Families—well, they're all with Families, but some are with the Housing component, I believe, and some are with a whole bunch of areas.

Is there—would you be amenable to, you know—is there certain ones that you want to call out first, or do you want to—we do have, obviously, a lot of, you know, great staff that are busy, too. So is there some that you think might be appropriate to let go or do at a different time? Just putting it out there, just so we don't have a number of people that are sitting around staring at the wall, you know, for the whole process.

**Ms. Fontaine:** So what I can advise for the purposes of the staff is that I have questions in respect of CFS. I'm going to try and—I mean, obviously, we could be sitting here for weeks; I'm going to try and wrap up those questions.

I do have questions for Housing and on child care. And I will point out that we are only here together until 5. So it's—I leave it up to the minister's discretion on how he wants to do that.

**Mr. Fielding:** Fair point.

Why don't we call up, if it's amenable to you, to call up the CFS staff and you—and child care, I guess, at the same time? And then we can leave the Housing—and then they can—once the questions are done, then we can have them go on their merry way and we can have Housing come up later on.

Would that be fair?

**Ms. Fontaine:** Yes. I'm good with that.

**Mr. Fielding:** Could you, Nahanni, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine)—could you just repeat the question once again? I know it's about the hotel strategy, but I'm not sure all our staff heard all of the question.

So, if you could repeat the question, so we could find the solution?

**Ms. Fontaine:** In the spirit of trying to expedite the many, many questions that I have, I will provide several questions right now.

What is the status of the hotel reduction team? Who is on it? How many FTAs? And what is the plan for the northern resources as being developed by the HRT?

Miigwech.

\*(14:50)

**Mr. Fielding:** Okay, we are getting a bit more information. I thought what I could just quickly do for you, the member from River Heights asked a question here quickly yesterday about I believe is the fishing co-ops, and there's some concerns about employment and income insurance, so I just want to answer the question quickly for him. I know he's not here but for the committee.

March 4th, 2016, an article published in the Thompson Citizen referred to frustrations with northern house fishing co-operative and a Service Canada investigation into employment insurance claims of seasonal 'fishing'—fishermen they represent. Employment insurance, also known as EI, is delivered by the federal government. So, just for clarification, the question that was asked by the River Heights, that's the answer to it. And that is—once again it's a federal program, so there's no provincial responsibilities.

Okay, so just to answer the question that was brought forth, I believe there was four questions. One was in terms of the hotel reduction strategy. Number 2 was who's a part of it, what type of staffing. I think I can answer that. They are getting the names, actually, as we speak, the FTEs that are associated with it. And then I think there was a question on the northern resources.

So for the record and for the member, a part of 2016 budget, the replacement of CFS authority staff assigned to the hotel reduction team, there was actually an increase of \$463,000 in this particular budget.

In terms of the collaborative authority resource team, responsible for building placement capacity in northern and rural areas—rural Manitoba, rather, the collaborative authority resource team, which is also known as CART, is the former hotel reduction team, okay? It was the dedicated team comprised of reassigned staff from each Child and Family Services authorities and the division. The team's purpose was to assist and support collaborative work with Child and Family Services authorities and their mandated agencies to support traditional planning and

development and long-term placement options for children and youth in emergency placements.

The former hotel reduction team was instrumental in ending the use of hotels as emergency placements through concerted efforts to provide up-to-date information to the child and family services field about Manitoba's placement resource options, including creating additional emergency capacity outside of Winnipeg. The collaborative authority resource team also has been focused on addressing the ongoing resource capacity needed for the child and family service systems and to understand and develop placement options through the use of information surveys. The team has hosted direct consultation sessions with The Pas, Thompson, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin, Beausejour and Lac du Bonnet.

There is four staff, one from each authority—and these are funded, I guess, through the authorities, I guess, if you will—and one co-ordinating person that is funded—not exclusively the role of CFS.

To deal with the final question, I think there was a question of who is responsible for the northern placement resource strategy. These additional placement resources will be developed in collaboration with regional areas and will identify community needs. Work undertaken will be approved by the office of the standing committee and supported by a collaborative authority resource team. Consultants will, with communities and northern and rural authority—agencies, rather, identified a number of gaps. These highlighted a need to develop both a short-term capacity and long-term placement options outside the city of Winnipeg to allow children and youth to remain in or close to their home communities. The placement options developed will be shared resources.

The process will support a further exploration of a centralized placement concept with our Child and Family Service partners. The model could co-ordinate several parts of the placement system, including Department of Families, provincial placement desks and possibly agency placement desks resource development, funding and licensing.

And just one final point to this, what is the northern and rural development strategy? Well, the priorities of the northern and rural development strategy include Eastman and Interlake region: develop three long-term specialized residential child-care facilities, one in Steinbach, one in Selkirk and another in Interlake with three beds for high-needs

teens age 12 to 17 years of age; develop a supportive independent living program for transitioning youth, male and female.

The Westman or Brandon regions: develop four to six long-term specialized beds to access to clinical services that support youth who are involved in sexual exploitation.

Terms of—and this is the final points here—The Pas and Flin Flon region: develop two emergency facilities with access to three beds each, male and female, for high-needs teens with clinical support in The Pas.

Thompson and northern regions: develop a long-term, specialized, residential child-care facility for high-needs families, repurposing the existing Marymount emergency receiving facility, develop a short-term placement resource for pregnant teens and teen moms.

The northern and rural resource development strategy supports the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs' report, Bring our children home, and its recommendations to develop services and placements for children and youth closer to family members.

\* (15:00)

**Ms. Fontaine:** Miigwech for the response.

Is the minister considering moving into block or global funding for CFS?

**Mr. Fielding:** What I'll do is I'll answer that question, and, as I mentioned, I do have some more answers to some of the questions she'd asked yesterday to the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine).

So, to answer your answer, I believe it was in terms of does the department—would the department consider using block funding as opposed to the per diem funding that's there. The government right now has talked a lot since being elected about the performance reviews and, as such, I think what we would look to do is to have that be a part of the performance reviews. I think there's probably pros and cons to both block funding as well as a per diem process that, for the most part, is what is the standard that was in place when we got elected.

So a part of that process we would review that as a government does and has the government announced of performance reviews throughout government. That is something that we'd be

reviewed. I guess, for my own personal opinions are—you know, on a case-by-case basis I guess you would have to review that. I'd like to see the merits of both. Once again, there is pros and cons to both sides. So I hope that gives you a clear indication of where this government's at.

In terms of the adoption, what the process is. I think you had mentioned yesterday, what is the process for adoption and many can this process take. Adoption applications filed—file an application with their local CFS agencies. As per Manitoba legislation, regulation and standards, the applicant attends an adoption education series complete with a package and require documents to meet the assigned adoption workers four to six times prior to a home study—being a part of that. Just trying to look for the answer here. The perspective adoption family is then placed by their adopted worker on the Central Adoption Registry, a provincial-wide registry of approved adoptive applications and children who are placement wards available for adoption. Once a family has been referred to the child by the registry, there may be several visits with the child prior to adoption placement. Following the placement, most typically, the adoption is legalized in a one-year time frame. So that answers, I think, your question.

It is difficult to give an average time frame, for the adoption processes will be varied depending on the number of factors. These include openness of the family to the placement of an older child, special needs or sibling group; the time it takes for a family to submit the required documentation; and the family's availability when scheduling their required meetings with the social worker to complete the home study.

The process may take from several months to up to 10 years or more depending on the needs of the children in care and the openness of the family.

So, once again, I think it's a case-by-case basis. Sometimes you're going to get it really fast; sometimes it isn't as fast. And there's a whole bunch of variables that play into that in terms of the government systems as well as the information being provided by the families in any given time, so.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Miigwech for that, but just for clarification, that actually wasn't my question. My question was just in respect of the current status on adoption wait times currently. But we will leave that for right now.

I understand that there was recently a directive coming from your office in respect of vacant bed days. And the decision was quickly reversed to—I know that the information that I had received was that the direction came from the department to eliminate immediately vacant bed days, and then I understand that, several hours later, that decision was reversed.

I'm wondering for those, I think, it's maybe 20 agencies that rely on those vacant bed days funding in order to ensure the viability and the certainty of their staff and their administration, is that something that's currently under review again, and will—is that something that the department is looking at eliminating?

\*(15:10)

**Mr. Fielding:** What I will do is I thought, to address this issue, maybe what I could do is read you a letter that was sent out to effect, in terms of the vacant beds, as you mentioned. This letter was sent out by Diane Kelly, who's, obviously, your Child and Family Services division assistant deputy minister.

So it says: I'm writing to clarify statements made by the Child and Family Services representative at today's meeting that may have caused unnecessary concern for some attending today's meeting. No order for recovery of funds or clawbacks with regards to vacant beds retroactive to April 1st, 2016, has been authorized as an area of priority consideration for improvements in the care of the most vulnerable children. That matter discussed relates to funding, and vacant beds will be reviewed in due course.

A formal review of a service delivery models will be conducted to collaborate in the interests of those involved. Their view will be conducted in a manner that is open and transparent, and that includes collaboration with those receiving and delivering services. This dialogue will ensure that Manitobans' most vulnerable citizens continue to be served in the best manner possible.

I trust this—that this provides clarification in response to the concerns that have been raised today. Please contact me with any further questions or concerns.

And that was sent out from Diane Kelly. I believe it was on June 10th. Hopefully, that addresses the concerns.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Well, part of my question was whether or not, and you do allude to it in—the letter does allude to it a little bit about—in respect of a review. And so, just for the point of clarification, so the vacant bed days' model will be under review and is potentially up for cuts, or am I reading that wrong?

**Mr. Fielding:** As the government of Manitoba, you know we mentioned, obviously, we want to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent effectively. We've talked about performance reviews as a government overall to ensure that money is being well spent. With that, I think the—I'll let the letter speak for itself.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Does the minister plan on formerly developing a working relationship with the First Nations advocate out of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs' Cora Morgan, and what would that look like?

**Mr. Fielding:** Thank you for the question. You know, I'm proud of the fact, you know, when I first came into this office, and I've only been there for about six—well, I guess almost seven weeks—it'll be a month after the new year, one of my—in fact, my first meeting of an outside group after being briefed from our department was with Cora Morgan. I was able to attend the first anniversary of the bring our children home report that was brought out, over a year ago, in their offices.

Since then, I've talked to Cora probably about four or five times, I think, on different legislations that's a part of it. I have the utmost respect for her, and I think that she provides some great information to the table.

\* (15:20)

So any advice that I can get from someone like that who has a—who, I think, has a stature, who understands the issues, you know, I'm going to listen to. You know, we obviously can—as we go forward, we're going to consult with people like Cora Morgan, the family advocate—First Nations Family Advocate, on a whole bunch of different issues. And, you know, I think citizens of Manitoba will want us to consult with as many people as we can, and part of the process of being the minister, and I did have some experience in this area. You know, in the late '90s, I think I'd mentioned I'd worked at the Children and Youth Secretariat, which has evolved to Healthy Child Manitoba, which I did work on some early intervention and prevention type of policies, in terms of—and one of the areas that I'm kind of proud of, and I'll tell you a little story here. When I worked there, I

worked there for about two and a half years, and I came to it without—wouldn't say a lot of understanding, but it wasn't an area that I had focused in. I—a background in some business and that sorts. So it was near—and a time in my life that I really learned a lot, and I tried to take that with me, within, and I think it's really important to invest in early intervention and prevention. And, when I came into the office, the main project that I worked on was something they called the parents' support project with the Children and Youth Secretariat—this is back in the '90s. And I eventually left the Children and Youth Secretariat. I moved into the private sector, doing a whole bunch of roles and not just with my business, but our family's business and other areas, pharmaceuticals and then on to City Council, of course.

And, when I came back and became the minister, I had kind of lost track with some of the projects that I worked on, and so I had the pleasure to meet with Diane Redsky from Ma Mawi fairly recently, and they—as they're briefing us, and so I asked Diane. I had a very good working relationship with her and the government, and I said, you know, where is the parent support project that I was involved in. I was kind of one of the lead project managers for it. And she said, well, it's a program called Sophie's Place [*phonetic*]; that's been in place for somewhere in the neighbourhood of 17 years and very successful. It was at Blake Gardens, and it was so successful that expanded out to kind of, you know, the facility next door to.

And the reason why I bring that up, I guess, is my point is, I think it's truly important to embrace the community. And I think you get great advice from people in administration here, but honest—I honestly do think that you get almost as good advice from the community. And sometimes the answers to the questions and policies, going forward, I think, is a mix of both. You got to listen to your administrative officials, and you got also look—listen to stakeholders, people like Cora Morgan, people in the community that can tell you they're doing some good things. I know the member had talked about Nelson House a little while ago. And I've heard nothing but good things about what's going on at Nelson House in terms of some of the programs that they have in place. In fact, I think they've had a reduction in the number of kids in care. So, once the session rises, and it's important that we're doing right here, but what I'm going to really make a focus on is to, you know, obviously, meet with the Grand Chief and

everyone else go to some of these places that I think are making a big difference in our community.

So my point with that is I do want to meet and work with people like Cora Morgan and other community stakeholders that are part of it. You know, as we go forward, we'll have to talk about formal versus non-formal roles, but I can tell you, we will be consulting as a government with people like Cora Morgan.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Do you plan to continue the previous government's work to create a stand-alone child's–Children's Advocate act with an expanded mandate?

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, thank you for the question.

And what I can tell you about The Children's Advocate Act that, of course, is something that there was some legislation that was brought forth. I believe it died on the Order Paper. You know, part of that–Manitoba, of course, is one of the only jurisdictions that limits the advocate's mandate of the Children's Advocate to advocate to children receiving, really, Child and Family Services. And, following this Felix [*phonetic*] Sinclair inquiry, Commissioner Hughes made several recommendations related to the Children's Advocate, and the act I think that was proposed would have really talked a little bit about some of the things that Justice Hughes spoke of.

Number 1, I think Justice Hughes spoke–he talked a little bit about creating a stand-alone legislation or the importance of creating the powers of the advocate as independent officer of the Legislative Assembly or also expanding the advocate's mandate beyond the CFS system, also granting the advocate the mandate to review serious injuries or child-involved renewed–reviewable services, enhancing the public reporting capacity of the child–Children's Advocate.

So I guess, you know, part of that, you know, we think it's important. You know, Justice Hughes obviously spent a lot of time in his report reviewing things, and that's why we've been really pleased to introduce the protecting children act.

And, as a government, we truly think that this is our first priority, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) made as a big priority introducing the protecting children act as a priority for the government. In fact, we introduced it within the first 100 days of our government. And a part of that we truly think that what Justice Hughes is talking about makes a lot of sense. It's sharing information if you've got too many

silos that are happening, with service providers, government agencies and law enforcement agencies, you're not able to share the information. And so we truly think that Justice Hughes, in his recommendation, had it right when he talked about the ability to share information.

And so that's why we're so happy to have that as our first step, our first step in terms of introduction and we're happy to have Sheldon Kennedy here today, and there is over 50 stakeholder groups that were also part of that; Ma Mawi was there, of course, with one of them. And so we think that's our first step.

\* (15:30)

But to get to–back to your question about the Children's Advocate, you know, I've been able to meet with Darlene MacDonald, and I think she's a very thoughtful person. And we started off with having, I think, a pretty good working relationship right off the bat. We also met with Cora Morgan, and I, you know, talked extensively with her.

So, at this point, you know, our focus really is on the protecting children act. That is something that we got elected on. It was a major, really, item in our platform.

So we really encourage other people, and we had an opportunity to meet with yourself and other members of the NP caucus, and I think some of your staff that are here, as well, and also the Liberals; we were able to meet with the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) to talk about the protecting children act. So we truly think that that is the first process for it.

I guess I can't give you an exact answer about the Children's Advocate in terms of extending the role right now. You know, we are just seven, eight weeks into government. So we really want to go out there, and, as I mentioned, we're going to have tours, we're going to talk to people, we're going to talk to stakeholder groups. And we want to get kind of a true sense of a pathway forward before I can commit one way or the other.

But I can tell you that the information that they do provide currently is extremely important. And we do want to listen to the Children's Advocate, in a whole bunch of ways, whether it be Cora, who's really the family–First Nations Family Advocate, or Darlene, who's obviously the mandated person.

So hope that answers your question.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Actually, no, it didn't. But I—so we'll move on in respect of—because that really wasn't an answer. It was just kind of this in-between of not committing and saying that you're going to meet with stakeholders. So, no, the minister didn't answer my question, like many questions, but that's okay.

Let's keep moving on here. I have—you know, I'm a pretty optimistic and positive person, so I keep having faith in people, that people will sit at the table in a respectful manner and actually get to the heart of the question.

So is there any work being done on the customary care legislation that was brought to the House?

*Mr. Jeff Wharton, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

**Mr. Fielding:** Okay. Thank you for the question.

And I think the question relates to customary care. And, you know, customary care is, obviously, a traditional practice where indigenous communities care for their own children and participate collectively around planning and placement and permanency. Really, the customary care practice aims to reduce the high number of indigenous children in care and support preventative services.

Customary care really enhances the opportunity to improve partnerships and relations amongst indigenous communities and leaderships and CFS authorities and the agencies while supporting self-determination and community control over the design and delivery of child and family services to the indigenous people of Manitoba.

Customary care really aims to improve the outcomes of indigenous children by focusing on preventions, supporting the family, promoting resiliency and the possible cultural identity, strengthening children's sense of value and belonging, and enhancing children's connection to language, land, family, community and culture.

A part of this budget—there is, in both the southern and northern authorities—each have customary care specialists working within their agencies. And I believe there was some funding that was allocated—I think it's in this year's appropriation or last year's appropriation towards that.

The long answer is: I do like the model of customary care. I'm going to be honest with you, though, our first priority as a government—and this is something that we got elected on—was the introduction of the protecting children act. So that,

right now, is the focal point for us. You know, as mentioned—you know, I don't want to go into details of who I want to meet with and all that sorts, because you know that already, but I think that's important to do some consultation with it.

I do—and I think I've said this in the media, too—I do agree very much with the concept, but I think you've got to make sure it's done right. And I know, when customary care was introduced on—legislation was introduced, there wasn't congruent—there wasn't total agreement. In fact, I think the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs—I think Cora Morgan—I believe there was letters that was sent, that they didn't think there was enough consultation that did happen with that actual legislation.

So a part of that, you know—I think what's important for us is to listen to people. I mean that's, really, what we're mandated to do, and that's what I want to do this summer. So, once again, you know, I think our priority right now, initially, is the protecting children act. That's something that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) mandated me to do—talked about in my mandate letter and was a major commitment for us, and something that we introduced within the first 100 days.

So not sure if that directly answers your question. I do like the concept of it, but I think the understanding—the legislation and timing of it is something that needs to be discussed, and I think we've got to do a better job of consulting with people. And that's really what I want to do over the next immediate future.

**Ms. Fontaine:** According to the 2014-2015 Family Services Annual Report, Manitoba currently has three—33,561 licensed child-care spaces. That means a child-care space for 17.6 per cent of children aged zero to 12 years; below the Canadian average of 24.9 per cent.

How many spaces does the Conservative government believe Manitobans need? What is the access target they are aiming for?

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Fielding:** Okay, thank you for the question.

Well, first of all, Manitoba has a higher percentage of licensed spaces than a number of provinces out there. You look at Nova Scotia, you look at Alberta, you look at Newfoundland and Labrador as well as Saskatchewan; I think on a child-care basis, I think if you ask overall to people,

Manitoba probably is ranked probably second to Quebec in terms of the child care that we have. We have, of course, kind of inherited a situation where you have over 12,000 children that are waiting on wait-lists overall.

And I guess what your question is, what's our plan to adequately address child care, and it was brought up a little bit in the House today. And first of all, I want to say that we're extremely proud, as a government, that we think we've got the most realistic plan in terms of child care. We had, over the last number of years, a lot of promises and a lot of announcements that were made, but, at the end of the day, if you still have, you know, over 12,000 or more—I think the numbers are probably even more of kids, children that are waiting for spaces for child care—it's not something that I think is—anyone would agree is a good trend to have.

And, you know, in terms of our strategy and our plan, we think it's most realistic, a new strategy for early learning and child care is being developed. As a new government we are committed to working constructively and co-operatively with early learning and child-care stakeholders to help Manitoba families who need licensed child-care services.

The Manitoba government will take steps to begin addressing the wait-time list for child-care spaces. We think it can be done in a number of ways. First of all, simplifying the process governing the opening and operating of child-care facilities with a focus on home child-care systems. And I can tell you, that's really important. That's—I mean, all three of my children have gone through the home-based child-care system, and we've developed lifelong relationships with our home-based child care. We think that it does make some sense if you simplify the process.

We also want to work with—in partnerships with school divisions to really increase the number of child-care centres in schools. And I can tell you, even last night, the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston) and the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) and myself had the pleasure to visit one of the school divisions that are local there; we do that on an annual basis, or we—I did when I was a city councillor and we continue to do that. And there was a great interest from the school divisions in terms of providing some space for child care.

So we're excited about some of the partnership opportunities that are out there with school divisions.

We think that increasing some of the incentives to become early child-care educators, including working in partnerships with post-secondary institutions to enhance scholarships and bursary opportunities and promoting ease of access to early child-care educating training programs by expanding training programs for more education institutions will make a difference in this part of our plan.

We're also going to increase work to work in partnerships with Family Dynamics which, of course, is a community organization specializing in child-care supports for families. And, really, the department and our government will focus on improving the access to child-care spaces through a program reinvigorating investment in private sector spaces and reducing barriers such as unnecessary red tape. Manitoba is proud of the inclusive support program which serves approximately about 1,600 children with additional support needs in licensing centres in homes across the province. And Manitoba is also proud of its affordable early learning and child-care system as it maintains the second lowest child-care fees, of course, in Canada next to Quebec, keeping child care affordable for families.

\* (15:50)

And, of course, the Province is going to work with the federal government in collaboration with the provinces and territories on a national early learning and child-care framework. We look forward to advancing Manitoba's priorities for licensing early learning and child care under a framework beginning in 2017-18. And I can tell you we had recent meetings. The federal minister was in town—I guess it was probably almost three, four weeks ago now—his roles are kind of similar to what my roles are in terms of the child-welfare system but also in terms of early learning and child care. And the federal government has recently announced, I believe it's close to 500—well, I'll look to my officials to see if I'm wrong on that—but I believe—or \$500 million in the recent budget towards early learning and child-care initiatives. And I think they've also committed to over a hundred million dollars of early learning and child care—is it for indigenous, Aboriginal? *[interjection]*

Oh, sorry, I'll stand corrected. So what the federal government, currently, is committed to is \$500 million, so I correct the record—\$500 million in 2017-18 be allotted for the following: \$400 million to support early learning and child care in provinces and territories and \$100 million for a separate

framework to support indigenous early learning and child care.

Staff from early learning and child-care programs and intergovernmental relations, in the department, as mentioned, have been working on a framework and we are good—we had a good, very positive first meeting with the minister. So, I think, part of what I identified in our plan, which we're extremely excited about, and some of the initiatives that the federal government, some of the money that the federal government is talking about in early learning and child care can make a difference. And we're excited about it.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I know that every time in question period that the question is posed to the minister about child care and what his plan is, and he's so excited about the plan. And I'm not sure how you can be so excited about the plan that's still in developmental stages.

And I want to juxtapose the, you know, the minister saying that, you know, they're going to be concentrating on home-based child care and, at the same time, he'll throw out there, you know, what a shame it is in respect of the NDP's 12,000 spaces. How does he expect to fill those 12,000 spaces with home care when we know that home care can only accept eight children, including if the particular, and in most cases the woman, has her own children. So, if a woman stays at home and has two or three children, that literally means maybe six or five children are in that home care.

So I'm not entirely sure what he's so excited about in respect of home-based child care. And, quite honestly, I'm really concerned when we start to talk about accessing private sector spaces.

So my questions are, you know, is this government moving towards more, you know, the privatization of child care? And, you know, what is this minister's target? How many spaces does this minister believe that we need to—on the wait-list? What is this minister's target?

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, thank you for the question.

I guess what we're so excited about in terms of our—with our child-care plan is, we think it's a realistic plan. We think it's a common sense plan. We think it's a plan that can work on a whole bunch of different facets. We really want to work with everyone. We want to talk to people in the communities, the Child Care Association. I had the

pleasure to go and speak to their group—I guess it was almost a week and a half ago, to hear what their concerns were. There's obviously lots of information that's out there. There's been a commissioner's report that has come out.

We also, you know, have noticed that under the previous NDP government, there tended to be a lot of announcements made. There was announcements in terms—you know, commitments that were made in terms of some of the spaces, and what I also note—and, you know, I'm one that actually—I enjoy looking at numbers. That's kind of my—that's something that I like to do and, you know, I chaired finance for the City of Winnipeg for six budgets. And, when I did look initially with the budget, what I actually noticed was—it was interesting because the actual funding for child care in terms of the operations, it seemed to kind of parallel election cycles.

So what you saw, in fact, in 2011, which was, you know, of course, election year, there seemed to be a spike in terms of the operating expenditures—or the, you know, the operating dollars that were part of it. And in the other years, there wasn't the same sort of growth. In fact, there was—if I'm—my numbers are correct, and I think they are, that there was actually a reduction in terms of the percentage increase for it.

So, I guess, it just kind of goes to that narrative of, you know, the fact that you see a lot of announcements that come out but, you know, at the end of the day, it's about what you can produce as a government. And when you do have, you know, a plan and you do have a government that has been in power for over 17 years, and you do have over—you know, over 12,000 space—people that are waiting, you know, on, you know, on a wait-list, I guess the question that you really—you beg to ask is, you know, were they more about announcements as opposed to actual practicality?

And so, that's why we think that a realistic plan is something that we're proud of and we think can make a difference. I noticed that in January 2016, there was another \$25 million that was announced for additional child-care spaces and money towards child care. But it's interesting that it actually wasn't budgeted for, so that's a bit of my concern. You know, we want a realistic plan, a plan that's going to go forward, and we want to work with everyone that's a part of this. We think that, you know, simplifying the process in terms of the wait times, in terms of opening, in terms of the operations of child-care facilities, really focusing in not just on the big

facilities, but also the home child-care systems are important.

We want to work with the partnerships of the school divisions, not just people like the St. James school division, I'm sure there's a whole bunch of different school divisions. I know there has been some discussion over the years with other school divisions that have showed some interest in that.

We also think that increasing incentives to becoming ECEs, including working in partnerships with post-secondary institutions to enhance scholarships and bursaries is important to promoting ease of access to early child-care education training, and expanding the training programs is important. And we also want to work with places like Family Dynamics.

\* (16:00)

So these are some of the items that we've talked about. I haven't, you know, touched upon everything. But that's why we're so excited about the plan is because we think it's realistic. It's a realistic plan. It's a common-sense plan. It's a plan that we think will work. We know that there's federal money that's on the table. There's federal money on the table; the member from—I can't remember where the member's from, but, so we, you know, when you have \$500 million in the federal government to \$400 million towards that \$100 million for indigenous child care, we're going to be at the table. We're going to be listening. We're going to work in partnerships with the federal government to help address some of the solutions and some of the problems that still exist in the system after 17 years.

*Madam Chairperson in the Chair*

**Ms. Fontaine:** I don't know if I'm starting to go in shock from this process. Like, this process is really just so counterintuitive and really so, in many respects, such a waste of everybody's time when we ask questions and we get these—this narrative of how I love numbers and how I'm so excited about this plan and I'm so excited about this plan. And meanwhile, there's nothing concrete in respect of actually what this plan is.

And, you know, and then, I mean, now I'm on the edge of my seat. Like, I honestly can't wait to actually see some meat and potatoes of what this plan is. I guess my concern is—is, you know, how do you develop a plan as a government but actually not have any targets? And so my question was: What is this government's target? What are the target spaces

in this amazing, illusionary, making me on the, you know, the edge of my seat plan? So I'm not finished. I'm going to ask that again: What is this government's plans in respect of spaces?

But I'm also really concerned, for the record, when I hear the minister say, you know, simplifying the processing of opening up, you know, home-based child care. It is really, for me, puts into question the health and safety of—and well-being of children when we're relaxing some of the regulations that we have and processes that we have that we know actually ensure the health and safety and well-being of children. So, you know, I want to have that on the record that, if you know—I'm not sure, again, because I don't know what this plan is; I haven't seen anything. And the minister just keeps repeatedly saying how excited he is about this plan.

So I'm going to ask the minister again: What are his—what is this government's target spaces for this plan? And I reiterate: You cannot have a plan without having a concrete measure of spaces in which this plan is then formulated.

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, to be quite frank with you, you know, and I'll continue. I'll go back and forth. I think the more realistic answer, and maybe this is something you need to, you know, ask yourself, but, I think the answer is that you don't like our plan. And that's fair game. I mean, that's fair game if you don't like our plan going forward. I appreciate that. But we do have a plan. We did announce it during the election campaign.

You know, I—you know, quite clearly, we talked about the need, you know, and—the—for simplifying the process for opening and operating the child-care facilities, you know, for home-based setting. I think that's realistic. I think that's something that everyone can buy into. I don't think there's anything controversial about that.

I think that working in partnerships with school divisions to increase the number of child-care centres, which is also an element of our plan, is something that's important that's there. I also think that increasing the early learning—early child-care educators, including working in partnerships with post-secondary institutions to enhance scholarships and bursaries opportunities by promoting ease of access to early learning and child care by expanding the training programs with more educational institutions is a good part of the plan. That is part of the plan.

I mean, I'm not being—I'm not trying to hide at all. We made these announcements during the election. This is something that I've talked about in the House quite a bit. Talking about continuing partnerships with Family Dynamics is also part of the plan. It's a community agency specializing in child-care supports for families.

So, you know, these are elements that we think is there. I mean, I think everyone agrees the federal government has committed money in their budget. They've committed over \$500 million, \$400 million initially for the Early Learning and Child Care, \$100 million for indigenous child care; that money is real. Those discussions are ongoing. Those are something that we had initial meetings with our federal counterparts, and the reality is—I mean, I don't—there isn't any money they sent to us that I can tell you of how much extra money is there.

So, you know—and I'm trying to be polite about it, but, you know, you appreciate the fact that you don't like the plan, but if you could recognize the fact that we actually do have a plan, you know, I would appreciate that and I think other members of the committee would as well. It's fair game. If you don't like it that, you know, that's a discussion politically we can have. But these are elements that we've talked about, and to be quite honest with you, another fact. It's not fiction, it's a fact that there is over 12,000 that are on a waiting list; that is a fact. And the fact of the matter is, you know, the NDP have been in power for 17 years and this is something that we inherited. That is also another fact.

So this is a productive process. You know, this is something where we're going through 100 hours of Estimates and I'm new to this as well. I mean, you're obviously a new MLA. I—

**Madam Chairperson:** Order. I'm going to remind all members that you are to direct your comments through me, not to one another. It's a form of respect for everybody and I think that's the best way we can continue to proceed.

**Mr. Fielding:** So, you know, I guess I conclude my comments. I guess, you know, we can respectfully agree to disagree on the best plan forward. But if I could get you to recognize the fact that we actually—we do have a plan here before us, you know, I would appreciate that.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I, you know, honestly. I'm not going to get into—I mean, if there's something that I have a

strict policy on, it's not getting into back-and-forth negativity here. And when you're saying, like, I don't like your plan, like, honestly, I mean, we're not in kindergarten here. So I'm just going to leave that comment alone.

I will reiterate, again, for a third time just for the purposes of our records here that I—I'm asking for the third time, what is your government's target spaces? Like, I'm not sure—I—you know, and, of course, I am a new MLA, as are you as a new—as the minister is a new minister. I just don't understand. I can't wrap my head around how you develop a plan with no target numbers, target spaces. It's, again, counterintuitive.

So while you're kind of mulling that over, the other piece that I would like to ask is—the commission on Early Learning and Child Care completed public and stakeholder consultations in January 2016. Their well-researched and evidence-based report included options for modernizing Manitoba's child-care system to be better positioned to respond faster.

What are your plans—what plans do your government have to move forward on the recommendations in the commission report. Miigwech.

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, thank you for the question.

And the Province will carefully review the recommendations of the 2016 commission report. And as a new government, we will work 'collaborately' and constructively with early learning and child care stakeholders to help Manitoba families with respect to their child-care needs and to meet the government's most improved commitment, which is a big priority for the government.

I'm not going to go too much into, you know—we kind of had a back and forth, and I respect your opinion, I hope you respect mine, in terms of what our plan is, but it is to simplify some of the processes of the government in terms of the operating, in terms of the opening for it. We want to partner with agencies like, you know, with school divisions and ECE and also Family Dynamics.

But the, you know, and your initial question was in terms of the targets. Well, we don't exactly know what Manitoba's share will be of this new federal money that's there. It's my hope that we're going to try and get as much money as we can to support early learning and child care. But those discussions

are ongoing, and I think enhancement of our plan will really depend on those discussions, those ongoing discussions that are happening with the federal government in terms of the amount of money that is there.

Manitoba is very proud of the inclusive support program serving close to 1,600 unique children and addressing support needs in licensed centres and homes across the province: affordable child care for families with the second lowest fees in Canada—we think, we're kind of, we're proud of that, outside Quebec—and we'll also subsidize for those who qualify; high training standards for Early Learning and Child Care and child-care assistants, as their experiences and expertise enables them to provide quality care in early learning experiences for children in our province; workplace training and supports for child-care assistants to achieve their early childhood education 2, educator 2 level, while being employed and receiving full salary; 'compency'-based assessment programs for child-care assistants with related training or internationally accredited, leading to the certificate—certification, sorry, of early childhood educator 2 level; and pension and training supports, as well as the wage enhancement retention grants to keep high-quality early childhood educators in the licensed sector.

**Ms. Fontaine:** So what I gather from the minister's comment is that actually the target numbers for this government is wholly dependent on what the federal government will be allocating towards Manitoba in respect of the early learning and child care dollars. So we don't know what those numbers are. So it's—I'm confused on, then, how you're going to develop a plan, if your plan is about waiting to see what the federal dollars are, then you can determine what your targets are. It's actually not a plan; you're just waiting.

And, respectfully, you know, I'm just, again, stressing the—my question in respect of what are your target numbers for the number of spaces, but now I'm understanding that you're now waiting for the federal government to see what dollars they put on the table.

Back in 2014-2015, the NDP government increased the amount of capital funding support to 40 per cent of capital costs to a maximum of \$600,000 for community-based, non-profit, child-care-centre building or expansion projects, and implemented an annual application process for the Family Choices Building Fund community-based stream.

Will this continue for 2016-2017?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes. The answer is absolutely yes.

The number for the capital-based program, as you've mentioned, the fund went from \$400,000, and it increased, obviously, up to \$600,000, which represents 40 per cent of the cost of the capital-based projects. That represents about \$2.8 million for this year.

And so the quick answer to that is: Yes, that's a part of the budget.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Will the minister commit to continuing to fund child care centres in all new school builds and continue the—to fund the child care centres that are currently in the works with schools currently being built or currently being renovated?

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Fielding:** The answer to that is yes, the—our department pays for the principal interest costs through the public school finance board. I believe in this budget, it was in the tune of close to \$400,000. And we also pay for the spaces as soon as they come online. Sorry, \$400,000 for the principal. Four hundred thousand dollars to the principal interest were included in this year's budget.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Miigwech for that.

Compensation for child-care workforce, both those employed in child-care centres and those to provide family child care is very low; turnover is high, causing disruption for children, for families and stability at licenced facilities.

What plans does the minister's government have to address compensation for employees in child-care centres and income of family child-care providers by introducing a province-wide market-to-competitive salary scale?

**Mr. Fielding:** A new strategy for early learning and child care is some of the items that we spoke of. As a new government we are committed to working constructively and cooperatively with early learning and child-care stakeholders to help Manitoba families who need licensed child-care spaces. Our government is proud of the high training standards for early child-care educators and child-care associations as their experiences and expertise enable them to provide quality care and early learning experiences for children in the province.

We are extremely proud of the wage enhancement retention grant which helps to retain

early childhood educators in the licensed early learning and child care sectors.

The Manitoba government will review the 2016 Early Learning and Child Care Commission's report and its recommendations related to the workforce.

**Ms. Fontaine:** This will be my last question so that I can give the member for Kewatinook time for the questions.

Under the bilateral child care agreement signed in 2005, Manitoba would have received five years of federal transfers in child care. In the fifth year of the agreement, 2009-2010, Manitoba was slated to receive \$54.8 million. In today's dollars that's worth over \$60 million.

In negotiations with the federal government, will Manitoba be asking for at least this much funding and how is Manitoba planning to spend the new federal dollars?

**Mr. Fielding:** And I thank the member for the question. The federal government, from their funding from their budget—there was \$500 million allocated—it's a one-year agreement, so there isn't any commitment right now in terms of ongoing funding. I think it would be safe to say most of the provinces, including Manitoba, would be arguing that that funding should be long-term. I think the number you had quoted was \$60 million.

I'm going to be honest with you. You know, if there's \$500 million on the table from the federal government, \$400 million and \$100 million towards indigenous child care, we're going to fight for every dollar. We think this is important, we think it's critical, and we're looking to make a good agreement with the federal government and, you know, if we can get more money that means more programming that means more capital. It means a whole bunch more of that plan we talked about can get done with a good agreement with the federal government.

So we're going to try and work as hard as we can and, sometimes, with the federal government you're going to agree; sometimes you're not, and there's been some talk of the Canadian pension discussions that were going on fairly recently.

So the answer is we're going to try and get as much money as we can, and we think it makes sense. We think it's a priority and that's going to be our approach going forward.

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** I received a letter from a representative of Lake St. Martin. It says—and I passed a copy on to the member of the Interlake—the PC government of Manitoba is proposing to shut down the Manitoba Housing settlement they purchased for Lake St. Martin. There are a lot of elders that are crying because they fear that they are going to be uprooted and moved again, which—they're very frail, and so this person is saying that they shouldn't be uprooted like this.

And, then, I got a call right before I came up from a concerned person who is on the base, the old radar base where the people have been moved to. There's currently seven houses occupied and they're watching left and right as other houses are being taken away and given to other First Nations communities.

Lake St. Martin was the hardest hit and I know there's progress being done. My husband actually works for Pemco Construction and it's in the middle—they're in the middle of doing a whole bunch of works for the First Nation's residents. But, at the same time, the houses that are there—the stock should have been given to the Lake St. Martin residents before, and now they're worried about getting relocated.

So, what are you doing to address this?

**Mr. Fielding:** We just had some more Housing officials come up here, so I want to make sure that they heard all the questions. I know one is coming up—Jill is coming up as well, so if I could get you, maybe, just once our Housing officials come up here, just so they can hear the question full on, so if I could ask you just to repeat the question for the record.

\* (16:30)

**Ms. Klassen:** My question was: Lake St. Martin was the hardest hit when the floods came. There's existing housing stock there and, apparently, the houses are being given away to other First Nations reserves in that area.

The priority should have been given for Lake St. Martin residents to live at that area, the old radar base, and they're concerned. And I just want to know what your—the government is doing. Why are there houses being moved?

**Mr. Fielding:** Thank you, I apologize for the wait period with it, but—so first of all, the provincial—I guess the evacuation site was built for Lake St.

Martin, and 66 units were provided. Currently, there are 8 units occupied by Lake St. Martin evacuees. There are 10 vacant units that Fairford First Nations went to look at yesterday because they also need housing. Forty-one units went to Dauphin River First Nations to meet the evacuees' housing needs, and four units in Rock Ridge.

Information is being sent out over the next two days to all, I guess you would say, evacuees. You know, people that would be impacted by it. So the information will be forthcoming over the next—probably—I'll say two days.

**Ms. Klassen:** Appreciate the answer. It's not really something, like, they know those facts. They were just wondering why they weren't a priority, seeing that Lake St. Martin was the hardest hit, but I only get three questions, so I'll have to move on.

The term 'for profit housing', on-reserve housing is an oxymoron. It's non-existent due to federal and provincial laws. The province can play a part in correcting this. I have been broached by several individuals, First Nation individuals, First Nation companies that have solid business plans that—and they want to address this housing crisis, but they can't proceed due to provincial impediments.

Can the minister commit to investigating and then correcting this provincial shackles—these provincial shackles?

**Mr. Fielding:** Okay so just a clarification, so you're saying that there's Aboriginal-owned businesses, indigenous-owned businesses that want to essentially bid on some of the work, you're saying. And you're saying that there's impediments to them getting into—I guess, to bidding on these?

**Ms. Klassen:** Not contracts out there per se, but they just want to go start building houses on reserve, starting their own entrepreneur business, sole proprietors, what have you. These aren't tenders or anything; they just want to start up housing businesses.

**Mr. Fielding:** On reserve, you're saying?

**Ms. Klassen:** On reserve.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, the Province doesn't have any jurisdiction, of course, right, on authority on reserve, you know, for housing. So it is a responsibility of the federal government.

Now, with that being said, you know, we have discussions—I'm going to a Housing ministers' meeting, you know, in the next number of days. So I most certainly can bring that up. But, you know, you appreciate the fact that we don't have jurisdiction on reserve. That is a federal government responsibility. So I can't provide an answer for you. But I would be interested to find out what barriers there—you know, they are. If there's some specifics about it, I guess is what I'm saying, I could use that as an example when we do speak with the federal minister, so.

**Ms. Klassen:** I appreciate that answer, and I don't have the—I know offhand, section 95 of CMHC housing, there's regulations in there that make it not viable for businesses to survive. And so I know that's federal as well, but there are certain other impediments provincially that don't allow for us to build our own houses.

And so my last question, then, is a child on reserve gets less support or resources in all aspects of life: nutrition, education, recreation—the list is endless, and I've heard you speak of this—than if they were off reserve.

What—I want to know specifics: What measures are you—is the government going to take so that this does not continue and I could bring words of hope to these kids?

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, of course, a part of that—you're—yes, I'm sure you're well aware of the federal human rights tribunal came down that talked about the inequities, I guess, I would say, of the service provisions in terms of on reserve versus off reserve. So that decision's been made, and I think there's some discussions at the federal level for it.

A part of that with my new role is I'm going to be co-chairing—get the exact name of it right, but it's indigenous child welfare. So there's—*[interjection]* Yes. I'll be co-chairing the indigenous child welfare—I don't want to say initiative, but there's discussions that happen with the federal government and provincial government. That's not just because they thought I was a great minister. That's something that was there before our time, where Manitoba had a say. I'm just saying that Manitoba will be co-chairing a committee that looks at that with the federal government, with Ontario. And that was something before my time. With some of the discussions with the federal minister, we raised that as an issue, that we think it's important that Manitoba is still chairing that process, which they have in the past. And I don't know if a final decision been made on that, but it

seemed that the federal minister was—were—was receptive to that.

So where I'm saying is, I think we'll have a good seat at the table to ensure that that is happening. I think that there has been some background discussions with officials in terms of, you know, that discrepancy we talked about in federal and provincial monies that are there. And so I guess what I'm saying is, there's—future discussion will be there, and I can tell you that Manitoba will be fighting for—ensure the equity position is there on reserve or off reserve for service provisions.

**Ms. Klassen:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

Apparently, Nahanni is not feeling well, so I'm allowed to continue.

I guess the next question would be in regards to the high number of kids in care and expanding on your plan. I understand maybe it's just an outline. And there are specific items that you can address, expand upon right now?

**Mr. Fielding:** I'm sorry, so clarification just on the plan to reduce kids in care?

**Ms. Klassen:** Yes.

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, you know, I think right now we are focused in and I'm not going to, you know, go into the whole—you've heard my speech and my thoughts on that—on the protecting children act, so I'm not going to go into too much more details. I'm passionate about it. I think it's something that can make a difference, I hope.

You know, I—we had some good meetings with the member from River Heights on it, and I think, you know, looks like probably some nuances you can make with it, but overall, there tends to be some interest in that area.

We think that's part of the equation. I think there has been some discussions on the customary care. I do think I—I think that there's—I think if you see what a number of people, experts in the field, have said about that, it seems to make a lot of sense, you know. You know, I want to focus in on the protecting children act as a part of it, and, you know, I had mentioned I do and, you know, I encourage you, if you'd like to come, you know, with some of our meetings when we do go up North and whether it be in your constituency, elsewhere, if you'd like to join us, we can. So I do see that, you know, being a part of the equation as we move forward.

With that being said, you know, I want to consult with people beforehand and listen to the stakeholders. We get good advice from our administrative staff, but also I think we get great advice from community services and looking for yourself in terms of, you know, how things are working, how things aren't. I'm extremely interested in Nelson House. I've heard nothing but good things about what's going on there from a whole bunch of different sources. So that definitely will be one of the areas that I want to tour. And so I guess, hopefully, that answers some of the questions.

**Ms. Klassen:** I just wanted to say thank you for the invite. I would definitely take you up on that offer.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Miigwech. I'm going to ask some housing questions in the last couple of minutes that we have.

In respect of new builds, would the minister be so kind as to advise whether or not there's enough money budgeted to complete the commitments to add 500 social and 500 affordable units by 2017?

\*(16:50)

**Mr. Fielding:** Thank you very much for the question.

And safe and secure and affordable housing is a fundamental part to our approach to addressing poverty. The availability of housing also facilitates economic development. The Manitoba Housing rehabilitation—renewal, sorry, corporation will honour the development agreements that are in place with project components contracting new social and affordable housing.

Demand for capital funding remains high, and Manitoba Housing employs a competitive project selection process to ensure that the most appropriate, sound, cost-effective projects are recommended for capital funding. Projects are under review right now on a case-by-case basis. Manitoba Housing will work in partnership with stakeholders to deliver new housing rental—new housing rentals, I guess.

We build—building housing facilitates economic development. Manitoba Housing will honour the developing agreements as mentioned. There is, obviously, an expression of interest for vulnerable population that was out there.

This government has committed a substantial amount of money in terms of housing. Our budget, actually, went up by \$45 million, which represents a 56 per cent increase in the budget. So we think that

the housing is a part of addressing poverty in a whole bunch of ways. We talked about the basic personal exemption piece, which we think is important. We've talked about social housing.

You know, we're going to review these on a case-by-base basis and we've had—I've had an opportunity to meet with the Gas Station Theatre performing arts co-operative group, and I think there is other meetings that are scheduled. And, so, we are committed to housing projects, but we're going to do it on a case-by-case basis.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Miigwech for that.

In respect of maintenance, would the minister be so kind as to advise whether or not the usual \$100 million in respect of housing portfolio restoration and redevelopment, and the \$34 million in maintenance and repairs, is the dollars still there for those?

**Mr. Fielding:** The answer is yes. The Province of Manitoba is spending \$34 million on provincial maintenance; \$100 million on capital repairs. The federal government is also spending \$33 million on modernization and improvements over a two-year period on social housing, that's '16-17 and '17-18 on social housing.

**Madam Chairperson:** Member for St. Johns?

No further questions?

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,082,258,000 for Families, Community Service Delivery, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$224,451,000 for Families, Community Engagement and Corporate Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$483,699,000 for Families, Child and Family Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$127,067,000 for Families, Housing, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,311,000 for Families, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 9.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$465,000 for Families, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the department is the item 9.1(a) the minister's salary contained in resolution 9.1.

The floor is open for questions.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Madam Chairperson, on—we did some research and what we found is that when you raised the minimum wage by 50 cents, it's a 4.5 per cent increase, pretty small in comparison to the 39 per cent raise.

The last time the Premier (Mr. Pallister) sat in Cabinet he froze the minimum wage seven times. Just a few weeks ago the Premier and his Cabinet gave themselves a significant salary increase but refused to commit to raising the minimum wage for those who need it most. At the very least, Madam Chair, the Premier and his Cabinet should hold the line on their salaries and take a reduction until they keep their promise of presenting a budget without deficit.

So, in the spirit of ensuring that the voices of those who need it most are heard, I urge this Premier and his Cabinet to reconsider the wage they gave themselves while working to cut funds from services families rely on and supports to families who need them most.

I move that line item 9.1(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$37,000.

**Madam Chairperson:** It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Johns that line item 9.1(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$37,000.

The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments to the motion?

Is the committee ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Chairperson:** Shall the motion pass?

**An Honourable Member:** Pass

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

#### 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. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Recorded vote, please.

**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.

*The committee recessed at 5 p.m.*

*The committee resumed at 5:15 p.m.*

**Madam Chairperson:** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the last item, resolution 9.1 of the Estimates of the Department of Families.

Are there any questions?

Seeing none, I will now put the question.

Resolution 9.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,839,000 for Families, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Families.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

#### SPORT, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

**Madam Chairperson:** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates for the Department of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Yes, I do, thank you.

Well, I'm pleased to be here today and I'm looking forward to the Estimates process and would like to welcome my colleagues and members opposite.

It is an honour and a privilege as the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, as the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs and as the Minister responsible for Status of Women to introduce the 2016 and '17 budgetary Estimates for our department. On a personal note, I'm also very proud to be the newly elected MLA for Riel.

These budgetary Estimates reflect our government's commitment to restoring fiscal discipline in a responsible manner while ensuring the protection of front-line services for all Manitobans. We've been very busy in our first few weeks. We have already delivered a Throne Speech and a budget, which is why we're here today. Our first budget demonstrates our commitment to getting back on a reasonable fiscal track. I'm committed to serving in my role as minister and MLA to work on behalf of all Manitobans.

My department, while it represents a fraction of the government budget, it represents programs that have far-reaching benefits to all citizens of our province, and I would like to share some of those highlights with you here today.

The Sport Secretariat's primary function is to administer the department's annual funding to its agency, Sport Manitoba. Sport Manitoba delivers and implements various programs and initiatives that are designed to support, promote and develop amateur sport in Manitoba. The Sport Secretariat works with Sport Manitoba to ensure that the Province's investments in sport complement and

support the government's overall sports policy priorities.

The Sport Secretariat also contains the office of the Manitoba Combative Sports Commission. The Manitoba Combative Sports Commission is a legislated entity that is governed by The Combative Sports Act. As set out by The Combative Sports Act, the commission regulates all contests or exhibitions of professional boxing and mixed martial arts, including the licensing and supervision of ring officials, boxers and promoters. The Combative Sports Act does not provide direct legislation or authority over amateur combative sports.

As the one-year countdown approaches on July 28, 2016, the 2017 Canada Summer Games represents a unique and exciting opportunity for Manitoba. Over 4,000 young athletes, coaches and officials from all across Canada descend on Winnipeg for two weeks of thrilling competition in 16 different sports. These games will mark the 50th anniversary of the Canada Games movement, all against the backdrop of Canada's 150th birthday celebration.

In addition to the young athletes that will be here next, approximately 25,000 out-of-province visitors will attend the games and will generate an economic output of more than \$150 million. The Canada Games are Canada's largest multisport event in Winnipeg, and we'll be the largest city to ever host the games. The games will also engage the fantastic support of 6,000 volunteers.

The 2017 Canada Summer Games will open on Friday, July 28th, 2017, and run through until August 13th. In keeping with the Canada Games motto of Unity Through Sport, as a nation-building exercise the 2017 games will be a tremendous celebration of youth, sport and culture. In a tagline coined by the Host Society, the 2017 games will be the hottest summer in half century.

\* (17:20)

Manitoba's signature capital legacy project for the 2017 game, Phase II of the Sport for Life Centre. Phase II is a \$26.5-million, 120,000-square-foot multi-use fieldhouse that is currently under construction and will be ready to open at the end of April 2017. Phase II is directly attached to Phase I, which opened in April 2010. Phase I contains the offices of Sport Manitoba, 65 provincial sport organizations, a sports-medicine clinic, a sports performance centre and the Manitoba Sports Hall of

Fame and Museum. Once completed, it will be the only facility of its kind in Canada that combines the governance, administration, heritage and development of amateur sport all under one roof.

I'm honoured to also have the portfolio of Francophone Affairs. Our government will continue to support the development of the francophone community. We are maintaining our financial contributions to the various organizations we support, either directly through the Manitoba—or the Canada-Manitoba Agreement on French Language Services—sorry, either directly or through the Canada-Manitoba Agreement on French Language Services.

Early in my mandate, I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of the Société franco-manitobaine. They reiterated their desire to see French-language-services-related legislation that would benefit all of Manitoba. More specifically, they asked that our government consider a bill similar to that tabled by the previous administration. We recognize that the strong francophone community is important to the development and growth of our province. We listened to them, and on June 14th, we introduced Bill 5, The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act. We were able to spark consensus from the House and demonstrate that we can all unite to support our Francophonie.

Manitoba has played an active role in the Canadian Francophonie, and we will continue to do so. Our bilingual service centres are a model of integrated service delivery. I will work with my colleagues to continue improving access to service in both English and French and to promote provincial department participation in the centres.

In addition to being the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, I am also proud—I am also proud to be the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. The Status of Women division works to identify the needs and concerns of Manitoba women, ensuring that they are addressed in government programs, policies and legislation. The division works in partnership with government and community stakeholders to lead and collaborate on initiatives that advance women's equality and contribute to ending exploitation and violence against women and girls.

In my role as Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I have the great privilege of working

with the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council. The council consists of a chair and community members appointed by government to reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of Manitoba. I am delighted to be working with this entire group of diverse women. This council brings to my attention issues that have a social, legal, economic or health impact on women in their communities.

The major agencies policy and planning unit provides expertise in the area of major agency relations and funding, strategic planning, policy development, program design and development of intergovernmental initiatives, research and financial comptrollership.

This year, the department will provide over \$19 million to support the operation of Manitoba's major arts and cultural institutions, including the Manitoba Museum, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the concert hall facilities in Winnipeg and Brandon, the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, as well as to the Manitoba Arts Council in recognition of the enormous effort and professional expertise required to ensure that Manitobans receive world-class arts and cultural experiences from all our major organizations.

The major agencies policy and planning unit manages the relationship between the department and its major external agencies. Through this function, the unit manages operating and capital funding in excess of \$22 million, or 33 per cent of the department's budget. The unit negotiates with external agencies on matters of budgets, expenditures, programs, legislation, legislative amendments and other issues related to those agencies. The major agencies policy and planning unit also serve as a liaison between agencies and government, ensuring that government is kept informed of the agencies' activities and that agencies are aware of the government priorities.

The Arts Branch supports and stimulates the growth, development and sustainability of Manitoba arts and—Manitoba's arts-based and cultural industries in order to promote and enhance the creativity, identity and well-being of Manitobans and accelerate the arts contribution to the economic viability and global profile of the province.

The branch assists and supports community initiatives to promote access by all Manitobans to the study, creation, production, exhibition and publication of works in the arts. It delivers support to the development of Manitoba's film and sound

recording, publishing, visual arts and crafts industries, including support to the Manitoba Film and Music.

Arts branch co-ordinates involvement with interprovincial national and international cultural initiatives, and provides support services and consultation in both official languages in the areas of marketing, arts management, resource development, skills training and cultural policy. In addition, the branch maintains responsibility for the management of the Manitoba government art collection, including acquisition of art, maintenance and care of the existing collection and development of policy and legislation that governs the collection.

And, unfortunately, I won't get to share my remarks at this moment because I believe my time is up regarding Historic Resources branch and other areas that I will share later.

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

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Yes. First off, let me congratulate you on first, your election, and then your appointment to this ministry. There's some very important aspects of your ministry that shouldn't be taken likely. Some of them that seem to be in the mix seem an odd place for them, and I'm left to wonder, for example, why the Status of Women is mixed in with the Ministry of Sport, Culture and Heritage. It seems to me that, perhaps, it should have been a stand-alone ministry, but I don't make those decisions. But my comment is it just seems odd to be in this mixture that you have, and I hope that you will do justice to not just it, but to all of your departments that you have under your control.

Some of the things that I picked up on when I was going through some of the documents is the mandate to make sure that all Manitobans enjoy participation and how it's going to make their communities better and how they'll feel pride in being part of Manitoba. So I look forward to seeing some of those plans as we go forward to see how everybody in the province will be participating in—able to participate in some of your plans.

Congratulations to Winnipeg on the Canada Summer Games coming up, and I look forward to seeing how everybody in the province will be afforded the opportunity to participate in those games, but also in future games that take place,

whether they be in Winnipeg or somewhere else in this province or somewhere else in the country.

So having said all of that, I think that really concludes my very brief opening statement.

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

Under Manitoba's practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of the line item 14.1.(a) contained in resolution 14.1.

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

\* (17:30)

**Ms. Squires:** So to my left is my Deputy Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage Mala Sachdeva; and then, to her left is the assistant deputy minister of Culture and Heritage Programs division, Veronica Dyck. We have Dave Paton, the executive financial officer, Administration and Finance division; and also at the table we have Jeffrey Conquergood, the acting director of Financial Services; and we have Beth Ulrich, the Status of Women secretariat; and we have Tehani Jainarine, the Multiculturalism Secretariat. We have Mike Benson, the director of the Sport Secretariat; and H  l  ne Fiset  te the Francophone Affairs Secretariat; and Debbie MacKenzie, the assistant deputy minister, Communication Services manager.

**Madam Chairperson:** Thank you.

Does the committee wish to proceed through the Estimates of this department chronologically or in a global—have a global discussion?

**An Honourable Member:** Global.

**Madam Chairperson:** Member for Flin Flon.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Global.

**Madam Chairperson:** Thank you.

It's agreed, then, that the questioning for this department will proceed in a global matter with all resolutions being passed once questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I'm interested in—I guess we'll start off with some of the things that you brought up during your opening statement.

Canada Summer Games, for example: What kind of budget have you got for that?

**Ms. Squires:** Thank you for the question.

And Manitoba's committed a total of \$8.1 million in operating support and \$3 million in capital funding to the 2017 games. As of the end of the 2015-2016 fiscal year, all of Manitoba's capital funding has been flowed, and all but \$1 million in operating remains to be flowed in 2016-2017.

Manitoba's funding is part of what is called the Canada Games financial funding framework, which is a funding partnership between the three levels of government and the host society. While occasionally a provincial or municipal government may choose to enhance its funding to the Canada Games, the federal funding is stable from one game to the next.

It should be noted that although the federal government will not deviate from the funding framework, the federal government does cover the cost of all the air travel for all of the PT teams. Depending where the games take place, the cost of this travel can be as much as \$6 million for summer games and \$4.5 million for winter games.

And I'll read out the following breakdown for the funding: The host society is responsible, in partnership with the Canada Games Council, for raising almost \$8 million from the corporate sector through the acquisition of national and sports—national and local sponsors. So, in terms of operating, there's a \$8.1-million commitment from the government of Manitoba, a \$7.35-million commitment from the Government of Canada, \$1,294,000 from the City of Winnipeg, \$7,947,000 from sponsorships and \$2,558,000 for other revenue. That's on the operating side.

On the capital side, \$3 million from the government of Manitoba, \$3 million from the Government of Canada and \$3 million for the City of Winnipeg, for a total of \$9 million.

**Mr. Lindsey:** Thank you very much for that—a fairly substantial chunk of money invested in these games.

Could you tell me where all participants, particularly from Manitoba, are coming from for these games?

**Ms. Squires:** Thank you for the question. All athletes will be coming throughout different quarters of the province, all four corners of the province. Four hundred and fifty athletes in total from the province, and they do come through the team trials selection

process that is administered through Sport Manitoba and other provincial sport-specific organizations. The teams are generally reflective 50 per cent male versus female.

**Mr. Lindsey:** How many participants are coming to the games from Tadoule Lake?

**An Honourable Member:** From?

**Mr. Lindsey:** Tadoule Lake.

\* (17:40)

**Ms. Squires:** Thank you for the question.

And while I do wish all athletes from Tadoule Lake much success, I'd like to report that we are early in the process and that the teams have not been selected. This process will be finalized by the end of the summer.

And in regards to the athletes in your—in that specific community, like I said, we don't have the final roster, but it's something that we can look at and definitely report back to you.

**Mr. Lindsey:** It's been suggested by some of your colleagues that perhaps my question was too specific, and perhaps they're right. So I'll broaden it out a little bit, if the minister could supply a list of what all communities' athletes are participating and expected to attend from.

**Ms. Squires:** Thank you for that question, but we will have to report back to the member, because, as I said in my previous answer, the teams have not been selected yet. And the process will be finalized later this summer. And we will report back to you.

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

The reason I'm asking kind of specifically is I'm wondering, according to your vision and mission statement, you want this to be a province where all citizens can contribute to and benefit from the quality of life in their communities and take pride in being Manitobans.

So I'm wondering how people in some of these northern communities that don't have sports arenas, don't have sports equipment, don't have anything, how or what your plans are to be inclusive of those communities to make sure that they would have—I'm not going to suggest an equal opportunity to participate, but at least an opportunity to participate?

**Ms. Squires:** Thank you very much, and I really appreciate this question and it's an area that I am

very passionate about in terms of how can we break down some barriers so that we can have all youth, and particularly youth that might be under-represented in sport, participate in sport. And I don't mind sharing with the member that in my own personal background as a single mom raising my boys, I had really relied on sport programs administered through the school and in the community to—necessarily to act as a partner in parenting.

And I think it was very vital as a single mom to have that partner, to have sport be providing my children with an outlet and an opportunity to be engaged in the community, to be athletic and to be involved with their peers. And it really helped guide my sons through some critical teenage years.

And so, I certainly value the enhancement of sport and what it can do for a community and what it can do for a family. And I think that it's very important that we have programs and services in place throughout our province so that more youth, particularly underrepresented youth, could participate in sport.

\* (17:50)

And so, specific to your question about Sport Manitoba, I mean, there are programs in—that Sport Manitoba does deliver throughout all of Manitoba including the North. And, in fact, there are staff up in Thompson to ensure—Sport Manitoba staff that are up there to ensure that there is programing available for our youth.

I'd also like share with the member: The new Sport for Life Centre is being built in an area that I'm very pleased to see this development in, in the core downtown Winnipeg, where it's going to be accessible to a lot of youth. And in meeting—when we were touring through the site, we were very encouraged to hear from the director that they are going to be opening it up as a centre for youth and under-represented youth and, perhaps, youth from underprivileged backgrounds would be able to come in and use the facility and have access to sport in that way without cost.

And in regards to another initiative that's under way that I'd like to share with the member, we are—Manitoba's in the process of sending—there will be 300 individuals from northern and remote communities and some in Winnipeg, as well, but 300 athletes that we will be sending to the North American Indigenous Games in Toronto in 2017, and

giving a lot of these youth the opportunity to participate in sport.

And last night, in fact, I went and attended a meeting, the Sport Manitoba board. And I was really pleased to see the wide representation and the passion of these folks who are committed to helping serve—facilitate the Sport Manitoba programs. But they're looking to set up a subcommittee relating to removing these barriers that we're talking about that—removing the barriers so that all kids, and especially kids that are under-represented in sport, would have an opportunity to participate.

So I was pleased about this subcommittee that is being formed and just the wide representation on this board of experts who are interested and engaged in ensuring that all Manitoba youth have an opportunity to engage in sport.

**Mr. Lindsey:** I thank the minister for that answer.

I'd be interested to see and hear your plans, your department's plans going forward on how to make things more inclusive, particularly for isolated communities that don't have road access, that don't have running water, that don't have an arena, don't have a basketball court, don't have, don't have, don't have.

So I'd be interested to see what plans you can put in place to try and make it more inclusive so that people from the northern communities, kids in particular, have a sense that they belong to the province and the country but also have a sense that when they come to these competitions, they're actually able to compete on an equal footing, that they've got the experience, they've got the equipment, they've got everything so that they can participate and feel pride.

So I look forward to seeing the minister's plans for that. And just to comment on whether it's the existing government or my government, to see the money being spent in Winnipeg—millions and millions of dollars. There has to be a way, and I hope the minister can find a way, to direct some of that money outside the Perimeter to northern communities, to rural communities that, perhaps, have issues as well. Although I think they're a little better served simply because they have the access to the next town type of thing.

So does the minister have plans on how to spread the wealth, spread the money around so that people in the North can participate?

**Ms. Squires:** Thank you very much for that question.

And just a few weeks ago, I was meeting with my federal colleague involved in sport as well as the provincial counterparts. And this was a broad discussion that we had because many communities throughout our country are faced with the same dilemma: How do we connect various communities together? And the federal minister had said something that has stayed with me ever since. And she was doing a, I guess, ongoing discussions with the youth, particularly at some of the reserves. And she had surveyed or chatted with the youth in Attawapiskat and said, what is it that you need? And out of all the things that they could have possibly asked for, community centre was No. 1 on their list.

And to that end, I know we're going to be working with the federal government. We're very excited about an infrastructure fund that they have announced in their budget that is going to be building community centres on reserves throughout rural and northern Canada. And so I'm very eager to ensure that Manitoba gets its share of allotted infrastructure dollars from the federal government so that we can support these very worthwhile infrastructure projects.

And in terms of, you know, program delivery at the provincial level, I am going to be working very closely with our other ministers because it certainly does cross over from—of, you know, variety of ministries. There's education in here, and how can we work through the education system to enhance involvement in sport; what kind of programs can we offer through the school system and what kind of education could we, you know, sort of push through the school system so that families are just adapting a more healthy lifestyle. That—you know, I believe that if a child has a role model in a parent, they're just going to automatically be engaged in a more healthy lifestyle.

And so the question becomes, how do we give parents the supports that they need to engage the child in sport? And then the question also becomes, what do we do for those kids who, perhaps, don't have those role models at home with mom or dad for one reason or another? Maybe they're not having a parent or an aunt or an uncle or someone in their family that's role—being a role model for—

**Madam Chairperson:** As was previously agreed in the House, the hour being 6 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

\* (14:40)

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

This section of Committee of Supply is now considered the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

Does the honourable minister have any opening statements?

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** Thank you.

Good morning—good afternoon, everyone. First, I'd like to take advantage of the opportunity to thank the constituents of Portage La Prairie for re-electing me. It is a real honour to have the privilege of representing them here in the Legislature, and I'm also like to thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for asking me to serve as Minister of Education and Training. It's been an exciting time learning another portfolio, and I hope to be able to do it justice.

And to go through the process of developing not only a speech from the throne, but a full-fledged budget in a relatively short time. It's certainly been an experience. But none of this really would have been possible without the outstanding work of the public servants within my department. Their dedication and professionalism during this transition—for many of them, it is probably the first transition from government to government that they have seen during their careers. So, certainly, there's been some changes and, of course, with differing structure in the department, some fairly great changes. And I'd like to thank them, especially, for their patience and kindness in regards to that.

I'd also like to thank the many teachers and administrators in Manitoba who continue to deliver quality education to Manitoba students. And I know that's appreciated not only by the students, but by their families.

Our province faces many challenges, and I'm looking—I will be looking to the departments to bring forward creative solutions. I will also be consulting with a number of different groups to get some creative ideas. And, of course, many of my colleagues have been very quick to bring forward some very positive ideas on how things might be

improved in terms of an education process to make Manitoba Canada's most improved province.

June 17th, I had the opportunity to attend the 18th Annual Civil Service Awards ceremony and recognize the excellent work and contributions of Manitoba's public service. I had the pleasure of attending this very efficiently run awards luncheon—actually done early, which was really nice. And members of the part—of our department were nominated for development of family child care self-employment project, which is an area of particular interest for me.

This innovative program supports many participants—mainly newcomers to Canada, though not exclusively—through the licensing process while, at the same time, enabling individuals to become home-based business owners. Though they were not successful this year, this section is representative of the innovative approach that is the hallmark of the ministry of Education and Training. The expertise, advice and analysis is valued and will inform every decision my department makes as our government works to improve education outcomes here in the province of Manitoba.

Education and Training is a critical portfolio, and not just for this Premier (Mr. Pallister), but—as a former educator, but to all Manitobans. Ensuring Manitoba has access to a well-trained workforce is today—in today's knowledge-based global economy is vital to the growth of our economy and our capacity to attract newcomers to our dynamic province.

Our government recognizes education changes lives. I think every one of us in the room here probably have at some point a teacher who made a significant contribution in terms of where we took our lives. And I know I have several that I remember very fondly, and received, actually, after the appointment to Cabinet, received a note from a former teacher in my high school years, which was very, very touching. In fact, a teacher that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) also had, and I know he received a similar note. It was nice to hear from that teacher. And I think that teacher was probably more than a little surprised, too.

Budget 2016 is a clear demonstration of our government's commitment to improving educational outcomes for Manitoba students. Budget 2016 provides robust support for indigenous, non-indigenous and French-language students, newcomers and immigrants, individuals seeking to

transition to new careers and companies looking to reinvest in their employees through training.

And it is particularly interesting to have the Training added to the portfolio of Education. We are finding, already, many strong linkages that I know that we will be able to build upon now and into the future and perhaps make the education system more directly linked to some of the value-added industry that we have here in Manitoba.

The appropriation for Education and Training increased 1.6 per cent or over \$40 million over previous years. This is a record for our government, targeted and robust investment in the future of Manitoba.

Challenges I have alluded to earlier are significant. Foremost among them, of course, is the \$1-billion budget deficit that is a lasting legacy from the former administration. The disregard for fiscal discipline over the last 17 years has led to higher taxes here in Manitoba, some depression among the private sector investment and a lack of high-paying jobs for Manitoba's middle class.

This lack of private sector growth has led to a loss of nearly 20,000 young Manitobans to other provinces, in search of better job opportunities. These young people are our scientists, carpenters, accountants, who have made the difficult decision to leave home to establish themselves and build a family elsewhere. I think every one of us knows at least one family who would dearly like to have had a job opportunity available for their child and they ended up moving to another location to find a job. Perhaps we can make our—us—by making us the most improved province in Canada, that we will be able to bring these same people back to Manitoba.

The former government's high taxes and high debt has driven away investment and driven away young people from Manitoba. Under a PC government, we will cut unnecessary government red tape and allow the private sector to grow Manitoba's economy.

The NDP's billion-dollar deficit has resulted in 5.3 per cent of the Province's revenue allocated to paying the provincial credit card. This figure stands at over \$840 million this year alone. These funds represent nearly a third of the Education and Training appropriation we could have utilized to build schools, to hire more teachers, to build daycares, invest in our post-secondary institutions, provide additional support for newcomers and

address Manitoba's historic injustices to its indigenous peoples, among many other important areas in need that need our support.

Previous government's habit of spending beyond its means, particularly around election time, has, in fact, cost Manitobans. With rushed, poorly constructed infrastructure projects chosen primarily to bolster short-term election strategies instead of long-term growth will continue to cost Manitobans with increased maintenance and repair costs for years to come.

The low 'graduation' rate among indigenous students is an area of concern for my department. Improving the graduation rate among indigenous students represents a significant opportunity to empower young indigenous people and their communities through education. It is their way out. A review of all programs within Education and Training will allow the government to examine which programs are truly improving the lives of our young indigenous people and need to be expanded.

Our government made a commitment to Manitobans that we would be—get better results for Manitoba's children, whether they be indigenous or nonindigenous. The bottom ranking of Manitoba among Canadian provinces in reading and math also pose a significant challenge that will require a co-ordinated response from Education and Training, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, Manitoba Association of Parent Councils and Manitoba school boards and other stakeholders to develop a plan to ensure early year students are able to read at or above national levels.

The NDP failure to make K-to-12 capital spending a priority over the past decade has resulted in a \$6-million cut, effectively, during that 10-year period. Manitoba was the only province to report a reduction in spending and was last among provinces in terms of K-to-12 investment in construction projects, whereas other provinces like Saskatchewan increased spending by \$166 million over the same period.

The lack of investment has led to increased pressures among school divisions and accommodating an increased demand for French immersion instruction, an area where we've seen significant growth, shortage of places for daycare spaces and also before- and after-school programming.

Special needs funding is another area in need of a significant reform, and I await in particular the results of the special needs funding task force that has been called to address a multitude of issues in this area. The situation is untenable, and I have identified it as an area we need to reform in my mandate letter with the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

Post-secondary education, and—I guess in review of time I will leave some of these comments for later, but I certainly look forward to answering the critic's questions as much as I can and, of course, I think he appreciates that some questions take time to answer more than anything else.

Thank you very much.

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

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** I'd like to begin just, again, by acknowledging that we're on the, you know, territory of Treaty 1 First Nations, the Anishinabe communities and also the Dakota communities who never signed a treaty, and the Metis nation, who, you know, found their birth here in these lands.

I also want to, you know, acknowledge, you know, the people from all over the world who now make their homes here in Manitoba, and, you know, it's with that shared vision of the future that I think we come here and look to collaborate and try and advance things for the benefit of all of our children and, you know, grandchildren, some day, potentially, God willing.

Education is super important to all Manitobans. It is an investment in our future, but it is also the primary means by which we also, as a society, gather to create the next generation of citizens. So, in addition to being a project with an economic component, there's also a project of citizenship building that we engage in when we talk about education, so I look forward to discussing, you know, the issue of the education of early childhood educators. That was something that I heard quite a bit about during the campaign, knocking on doorsteps in Fort Rouge. I know that, you know, the K-to-12 system is something that is top of mind for many parents and grandparents in the province, and so I look forward to having a discussion about the opportunities and challenges there.

And on a personal level, post-secondary sector is one that I've spent some time in, and am personally interested in, and, in addition to that, it is one that is very, very closely tied to the economic prospects of our province, so I know we'll have a good and thorough discussion about that.

I welcome the minister's comments about, you know, some particular targeted supports for advancing indigenous achievement in education. It's a personal area of interest of mine as well, so we can collaborate on that and more than happy to help however I can. Even beyond the scope of this committee discussion, if I can ever offer any assistance, I'm more than happy to do so.

Also, again, I'm glad to hear the mention of special needs education. That's another area that I spoke about on the doorstep to many people in Fort Rouge, and so that's another big priority.

So all in all I look forward to some good discussions in this committee and hopefully we can move forward in a good way.

\* (14:50)

I also should mention, Mr. Chair, that I think the minister dropped off some strawberries with some of my colleagues earlier today, so we want to thank him for his generosity. *[interjection]* Yes, well, perhaps, you know, it's designed to help a smooth, bipartisan, you know, flow to these committee hearings. But I'm sure the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) will have his chance to have some of those too.

So anyways, I just want to open with, you know, some good wishes and offering, you know, a couple thoughts on the record, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

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

Under the Manitoba practice, the debate of the minister's salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration for the line item number 16.1(a), contained in resolution 16.1.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

Could the minister and the critic please introduce their staff in attendance?

**Mr. Wishart:** I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce some of my colleagues that have joined me in the Chamber.

The deputy minister, Bramwell Strain; Helen Robinson-Settee, who's director of Aboriginal Education; Claude Fortier, executive director, Administration and Finance, who loves his numbers; and Jean-Vianney Auclair, who is acting assistant deputy minister, Advanced Learning.

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

Could the opposition introduce the—his staff member, please?

**Mr. Kinew:** This is Stephen Spence, who is working on the—and is this your last day? *[interjection]* Yes. So, he's one of the interns who's—it's their last day. So special shout-out to him on the record here in the House.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you very much.

Does the committee wish to proceed with—through this Estimates of this department chronologically or have a global discussion?

Minister, is it global that you want?

**Mr. Wishart:** Yes, but it's his discretion, not mine.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay. Oh, it has to be agreed. Okay? *[Agreed]*

It's agreed that—a global discussion.

Thank you, and it's agreed that when—questioning in this department will be proceeding as a global manner and all resolutions will be passed once questioning is concluded. The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'd like to begin by asking if the minister could tell us who is on the Public Schools Finance Board now?

**Mr. Wishart:** My deputy minister is the chair, Bramwell Strain; Fred Meier, who's the deputy for—*[interjection]*—oh, Municipal Relations, that's right; and Lynn Zapshala, who's Secretary to Treasury? *[interjection]* Yes, are the three members of the committee.

**Mr. Kinew:** Thank you, and thanks for the prompt reply.

I was looking at the Estimates book, and I think I'm reading it right that the funding to schools program—the level of funding this year is \$1.353 billion. I think that's the right figure, which I

believe represents an increase this year of 2.55 per cent.

I guess, just very briefly—just to ensure that we're on the same page, could the minister just confirm that I'm looking at the right numbers there?

**Mr. Wishart:** I would confirm that those numbers are correct.

While I'm at the microphone, I would also like to congratulate the critic for—I guess yesterday, was it—winning an award as the emerging writer, Kobo award. So congratulations in regards to that.

So—but those are the correct numbers and the correct percentage.

**Mr. Kinew:** Thanks for the gracious remark from the minister.

Is it the minister's intention to continue to boost funding at or above the rate of economic growth for this funding of schools program?

**Mr. Wishart:** That is the general direction that this government is choosing to take, to try and keep the rate of funding increases in line with the increase.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'd like to ask a few—Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask a few questions about capital funding for K to 12 system.

I'd like to know: Is the new school in Brandon going ahead?

**Mr. Wishart:** I can tell the honourable member—critic that we did not remove any funding for schools in Brandon from the budget.

As the member may or may not know, there was never any funding passed through Treasury Board for that school. We continue to evaluate that particular situation. That is done, mostly, through the school board funding process. And we will certainly be looking very closely at whether or not there's—the numbers justify another school construction there. And that's probably something that we'll have to deal with in the future at this point in time. But, as the member also knows, it takes several years in terms of planning and construction in that process anyway.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I believe that that prospective school project in Brandon was in an assessment phase. Can the minister update us as to whether that assessment has been completed, or what stage are we at in the potential development of that school construction project?

**Mr. Wishart:** The member is at least partially correct. We're based on—we're working based off enrolment numbers and the need, and it's still in the assessment process.

**Mr. Kinew:** And could the minister tell us whether the Waterford Green school in the Winnipeg School Division project is moving ahead?

**Mr. Wishart:** I can tell the member that the Waterford Green project is still in the planning stages and the assessment stages.

It, of course, will be subject to any sudden changes. I understand that is one where a significant number of new immigrants have settled in that area, and what may change our assessment of that during the course of this particular year.

**Mr. Kinew:** Could the Minister of Education just explain how the—that demographic trend you referred to might change the assessment process of the school?

\*(15:00)

**Mr. Wishart:** It's not really a function of the demographic change. It's the number of younger people that would come in the community and that would have need of the school. So, it's an assessment mostly based on the need and demand on that school space in that community and whether or not there are schools in the surrounding community that can absorb the shift around that might possibly take place. That depends, actually, on other school divisions a little bit as well because there is always the opportunity to move a little bit one way or the other.

**Mr. Kinew:** Does the minister have a timeline for when this assessment of the Waterford Green school would be completed?

**Mr. Wishart:** We are certainly well along in the phase in terms of assessment. We are not, at this point, committed to construction until everything is completed. The school division is in—have been part of these discussions and so, certainly, is aware of where we're at.

But I think during the course of the year, as the member probably realizes, we've received about 800 or so, maybe 850 now, of the refugees have come into the province. We're expecting significantly more than that, so that'll have at least some factor as to where people end up settling. They're—and that does evolve as we go along because people often receive a first placement and then there's usually, a few

months later, a significant shift around in the process. And where the demand will be in terms of additional education requirements for students that come as part of the refugee process has to be kind of factored in as it evolves. It does make it particularly challenging to know which schools are going to have the biggest increases because of that.

**Mr. Kinew:** Does that mean that the assessment will be complete in the next school year?

**Mr. Wishart:** I think that if everything goes according to plan, that we should have the assessment completed by the end of 2016 as the year evolves. That does, of course, mean that it'll be a—some delay in terms of tendering process and planning process until the school is actually under construction.

**Mr. Kinew:** Could the minister tell us how much capital funding is available this year in the Active Schools Fund?

**Mr. Wishart:** At this point it looks like we're still the—in some evaluation of the process. Of the total, we've approved about \$24 million in its approximate number. That will continue to evolve as there is still money allocated in that regard and proposals that are being developed.

I—you know, I got to remind the member opposite that in the last 10 year period, actually, the underfunding of school construction in this province created a fairly significant burden for many of the school divisions, and certainly made them tighten spaces. I think every one of us knows how many supplemental facilities are attached to schools across this province in many cases, and that is a direct function of chronic underfunding that has been occurring in the last 10 years. Especially if you start comparing our situation to other provincial situations, you find that we are very, very far behind with an actual decrease in many years in terms of real dollars that were available.

So I think our government deserves a fair bit of credit for the fact that we have moved forward this year not only with capital funding projects, but with a solid level of support for the K to 12 system and the post-secondary system in terms of additional funding for those programs so that we can begin to correct what had occurred in the last 10 years.

**Mr. Kinew:** Could the minister clarify that \$24 million figure? Is that the amount that's being disbursed this year, or is that the overall funding envelope for the program?

**Mr. Wishart:** That is not the total overall funding that is available for that, but that is approximately the amount that will be disbursed during this year.

**Mr. Kinew:** And can the minister tell us how much in capital funds will be distributed this year from the art, music and theatre fund?

**Mr. Wishart:** Can the member repeat the question, please?

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Can the minister tell us how much in capital funds will be distributed this year from the art, music and theatre fund?

\*(15:10)

**Mr. Wishart:** Actually, we can't give you a solid number for this year because the schools actually have until June 30th to apply for this. So we're not—we're still in the process, effectively, of taking applications. But I think the member probably realizes we have been quite forward looking in terms of a solid commitment to increase funding in this area. So we're certainly be looking for many applications in regards to this.

Certainly, the case has been, for many of our school projects, we're oversubscribed in terms of—yes, in terms of number of projects as compared to the amount of money that's available. So we'll have a process of going through a number of applications to find those projects that are in the greatest need, and perhaps that give us the best results for the dollars that we have available.

So I could share with the member once we get to that point in time, but it will probably be somewhat later in the year because we're still in the process of taking applications.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister tell us the amount of money that will be—in capital funding that'll be distributed under the special needs life skills fund?

**Mr. Wishart:** The amount that we will be spending in this fiscal year, I guess, would be about 10 'mal' in terms of dollars that will spent in this particular year. We are, of course, waiting, as I referenced in my early remarks, an evaluation of special needs and how that funding will be—will—had best be used in the future.

I think the member heard, and I know that I heard from a number of people, that the process that we have in place now in terms of a proposal-based has certainly led a lot of people down very

frustrating paths and created an additional administrative load that hasn't been very productive.

So we are looking for solid recommendations from the task force. I hope that they're able to bring those forward to us, and we'll certainly look at evaluating their recommendations and seeing if we can put them in place fairly quickly.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the Education Minister tell us what is the scope of this task force? Like, what specifically will it be looking at in terms of reforming the way special needs education programs are going to be delivered?

**Mr. Wishart:** My understanding that the special needs task force mandate was more specifically around funding options that would be available for level 2 and level 3 kids in the process and the programming options that might be available around that. So we're hopeful that we'll get not only a—some changes to the funding formula that we can put in place, but perhaps an expansion on programming options that might be effective in dealing with those kids with special needs.

I think the member appreciates how many kids in the school system now come to us with special needs, though there is certainly some research that suggests if we do a better job in some of the early years that it does reduce the special needs funding later on in the education system, and so we'll be looking at some options in regards to that so that we can try and build a system that meets the needs of those—that particular group more effectively and without an administrative burden.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister clarify if this is a new task force that was constituted when he received his mandate or this is a previous one that was already? So I—so from Hansard I see that he's indicating that this was the one that was previously undertaken. So it was my understanding that the task force was already, Mr. Chair, that the task force had already delivered its recommendations. Can the minister confirm that?

**Mr. Wishart:** Actually, there was some early discussions, but that the report has not been delivered. Actually, the period of work that they've asked for has been extended, so additional funding has been put forward to help them complete their report.

It was the existing report that, going back to the previous question, that they—that had been put in place previously. But it is certainly a significant

need. The member knows that all across Manitoba we hear all the time from people about how the funding is done and how arbitrary it appears to some people. We need something in place that is predictable and not a very significant administrative burden for many families and for the school divisions and the teachers as well.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister tell us how long the work has been extended, when he expects the final report to be back?

**Mr. Wishart:** It would appear the preliminary report needed some additional work done in association with it, which is something that we are working on and hope to have completed over the summer.

So we're looking at probably a final report from the original estimated timelines, probably with consultations that would be built into it as well because there's always the need to bring in all the players that are impacted, something in the neighbourhood of an additional year. If it is possible to get in before that, of course, we would certainly be looking to do that.

**Mr. Kinew:** And can the minister tell us what the additional amount was that was devoted to funding this extension of the task force?

\*(15:20)

**Mr. Wishart:** The approximate amount of funding that will be added to this process is about another \$150,000 in terms of direct costs, and some of that will be put in place in terms of a pilot to try some of the suggestions.

There's also some people from different school divisions that have come and have been seconded to help with the process to try and make—try and get to the results more quickly and try and have a little more thorough analysis of the results.

**Mr. Kinew:** I was just looking at a news report from earlier this year that was responding to the previous recommendations made by the task force.

And one of the things that's made mention to in this article, is that the task force recommended the elimination of applications to be able to access these programs. It appears the government at the time committed to implementing that.

I'd just like to know whether that decision is going to be revisited, or will that elimination of the application process still be in place?

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly, the focus is on simplification of the funding formula, and though I know that there was a press release regarding getting rid of application—an application base. Whether we're able to actually reach that goal, it's one thing to agree to it at high level, but once you actually put it into a place practically, it's sometimes a little more difficult to deliver on a process that has no applications. But we're certainly looking at ways to do that.

We're also looking very hard at different funding formulas that might work into this. So, we are attempting to try and develop a system that has a minimum amount of red tape in terms of applications and—but yet has a predictable funding formula moving into the future which would help, of course, every school division and every teacher know what the potential would be from year to year in terms of funding for their special needs students.

**Mr. Kinew:** When the minister makes reference to pilot projects that will be included under this additional scope of work, does that include the previously announced pilot program in the Louis Riel School Division?

**Mr. Wishart:** That would include, of course, the previously announced one as well, as well as some effort to try and make sure that the—whatever application process is done or what administrative process is done actually works in terms of being able to be functional in the system and works for the different school divisions, and a consultation process with the school divisions on how that might work.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister please provide, like, a more detailed explanation to what he means around the administrative changes, and how that would actually be piloted?

**Mr. Wishart:** We're certainly looking at ways to try and reduce the amount of paperwork that is involved, both in the granting process and the application process, making sure that it works as much as possible with the different school divisions and try and minimize the amount of administrative burden that is in place. Every dollar that's spent on administration, of course, is not spent on students, so we are looking at different options in regard to that.

There's been some discussions, of course, but recommendations actually need to be worked on in terms of getting an actual process that might well work with the least amount of significant stress or additional burden in any regard for the different

school divisions, and for the teachers that make the applications.

**Mr. Kinew:** I take, you know, seriously the comments about reducing the administrative burden on, especially, I guess, the families and students who require these special needs programs.

I'm curious, though, what—where did the advice come from to walk back the commitment to having no applications that was made previously, and then now we're hearing that there will be some application process. Where did that recommendation come from?

**Mr. Wishart:** It's my understanding that funding applications that have been previously approved will not need new applications. But, of course, there'll be new applications required for additional funding applications as we move forward, especially for special needs levels 2 or 3 funding who continue to meet eligibility criteria. Think it puts a little more onus back on the school principal and the student services administrators to make sure that this is done locally in the school and in school division.

So, really, it would—it'd reduce the number of applications to young students entering the system at kindergarten or transfers or new to the province or perhaps newly diagnosed with a disability who might require multi-system planning due to complex needs or extreme emotional behaviour.

**Mr. Kinew:** One of the things I heard about in the campaign from parents of children with special needs was some concern about the wages paid to the workers who sometimes facilitate those services.

Is the issue of wages part of the purview of this taskforce?

**Mr. Wishart:** As the previous minister will know, that was not part of their mandate to look at wages.

We certainly recognize that the whole issue of wages for training for early years, special needs and other teaching assistance is one that needs to be dealt with. I know that our plan as a government is to move forward to try and do some evaluation.

There's a number of sectors and a number of different departments that provide a level of services to different vulnerable populations across the whole of government sector, and we will certainly be looking very carefully at how they're paid and 'renewed' in the future. But think that the member also recognize that, with the indexing that we have brought in in terms of tax adduction and the

higher personal exemptions in terms of taxes, that we are trying very hard to put additional dollars into everybody's pocket. And these people, also, will be impacted by that so that, hopefully, we can increase the amount of money that goes home to their kitchen table at the end of the pay period so that they have a little more money in terms of how they're 'renewed', and it'll provide them with opportunities to do a little better in Manitoba's growing economy.

**Mr. Kinew:** The changes to the tax brackets and basic personal exemption would likely put a few dozen dollars more in the pockets of people in this wage category, whereas an increase in wages of, you know, maybe 50 cents an hour would put a few hundred dollars more in their pockets each year.

So there's really an order-of-magnitude difference. So that is why I was, you know, asking specifically about wages rather than the changes to the income tax regime that have been brought in under the new budget.

\*(15:30)

So, I was wondering if, with that in mind, the minister can provide a detail as to how that will be dealt with. You know, he referred to the wages of the—those working with special needs children being increased in the future. So how, exactly, will that be looked at and, you know, when can we expect, you know, progress on that front?

**Mr. Wishart:** I do not really agree with the member in the terms of indexing and adding to the personal exemption will not, in the end, turn out to be a significant factor in terms of people's ability to bring—improve the dollars that they bring home to their kitchen table. Those are cumulative, as the minister—or the member probably understands. And though we've indicated that this is only year one, we've indicated that we plan to continue this into the future so it becomes an add-on for every particular year.

And I think you'll find that a province like Saskatchewan, who has been doing this for a while and has kept up and is very competitive in terms of their tax regime, and they have the fact that all things are indexed in regards to that, actually finds that they're quite capable of bringing home significantly more dollars to everyone at the end of the year. A family of four, depending on whose numbers you want to believe and the amount of income that they

make, can bring home several thousand dollars more in Saskatchewan. And I think that's not insignificant.

That said, I understand that all these things take time. It is our intention, actually, as I mentioned earlier, to have a review of a number of these situations in government. And we talked about that during the election campaign as well, that there is definitely a need to review not only how much people get, especially those that deal with the most vulnerable population, but how they relate to one another in terms of the services that they provide and the amount of dollars and 'renumeration' and training that they require. One of the ones that always gets put forward is early childhood educators, as an example, who take quite an extensive course, as the member knows, and have to pay quite significant dollars to take that course, as much as \$10,000 through Red River College over two years, and in return very often enter the workforce at minimum wage or not much more than minimum wage. And certainly there is a lot of public sympathy for the fact that that's probably not in line with the amount of training that we require of them.

So it's certainly something that I think all of--all Manitobans want us to have a look at. And we have indicated as a government that we're prepared to have a look at that. But I've got to remind the member: We're seven weeks in. And he's asking us to accomplish things that some of his colleagues had literally, you know, a decade and more to try and accomplish, and though they tried to do it in one form, it didn't really seem to yield the kind of results that I think that they had hoped for, particularly as you look at the number of people in poverty here in Manitoba, even working poor. I think the member understands that just changing one number, when you add costs in other places, do not yield the kind of results that a government wants. You have to look at the big picture, and you have to try and get things in balance. And that includes things like a tax regime that gives people back their own dollars that they have earned.

**Mr. Kinew:** So with his comments on the ECEs in mind, will the Minister of Education then recommend an increase to the minimum wage next year at the Cabinet table?

**Mr. Wishart:** No, I'm not going to go on record as saying that I recommend that, especially when we haven't really got the process started yet. I'm sure the member doesn't want to recommend anything from a year from now to his colleagues without having

completed the task involved in doing due diligence. If nothing else, I'm usually very thorough in terms of what I--when I look into material. And I certainly intend to have a solid look at this.

I think it's actually important for all Manitobans that we evaluate the funding for those that provide the additional services to those--to our most vulnerable people. You can--I talked a little bit about early child educators, but those that are providing services to disabilities fall into the very same category, and there are quite a number of them out there. Not only is it a question of 'renumeration' but job security in terms of how they move forward. We're finding more and more people with disabilities who want to manage their own staff placements as much as possible. I think it's a great program. But it's very difficult for them. What they're asking in many of--and receiving in terms of services from many of the caregivers are very personal services. And they do not want to have a situation where they change staff on a frequent basis. It is something that we would like to see create a situation that provides maybe not lifelong but certainly longer-term situations so that people have a relationship between their caregivers and those that are receiving the care.

The number of people with disabilities continues to rise in the province of Manitoba, and I think we need to be very aware that this is all part of the picture, especially in terms of many of the staff involved move around from that sector to early childhood educators to--into the school system, and it is a bigger picture in terms of relationships. It is not just one particular sector.

And, as I said, we will certainly be looking very carefully at how people receive their 'renumeration', and whether they get to keep that in their pockets and on the kitchen table. And, as I mentioned earlier to the member, we're certainly very committed in the long term to improving the amount of dollars that people get to take home.

I know the member is not attached in any way to the federal Liberal Party, but if he has anyone there that he knows very well, you might suggest to some of them that things like income splitting actually hurt a lot of people in many ways, and not the least of which are some of the spouses and other people that work in the household that may work in this sector and aren't able to take advantage of those kinds of tax advantages that were potentially in place and would actually have helped a lot of households retain more dollars in the household.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, it's quite disappointing when a previous government makes commitments that a subsequent government does not live up to. I know that's something that we've heard quite a bit about, so I take seriously his comments about income splitting and I'll undertake to give some thought to that.

And I just say, you know, it seems that the—you know, in a very genuine way I say this: It seems that the minister does have some insight and empathy for, you know, low-wage earners or people on a minimum wage. So, even if he can't make a commitment today that he'd make such a recommendation, I'd just, you know, encourage him to keep that in mind. And, when the discussions come up at either the Cabinet table or the relevant committee, that, you know, that he give some thought to that. And I would encourage him to recommend higher wages for both minimum wage earners and higher wages for those working with those with special needs.

So with those remarks on the record, I'd like to ask: What is the amount of the per pupil grant provided to private schools for this year?

**Mr. Wishart:** On the first part of your comments, I will certainly always endeavour to make sure that that voice is heard around the Cabinet table, or whatever other committees. There are certainly many challenges out there, and having worked in that sector quite a bit in the last few years, I understand that there are many people out there that are under fairly significant financial stress.

\* (15:40)

There are a number of ways to solve that, and it isn't always about increasing the minimum wage. As I referenced earlier, there are other ways to make sure that people get—that take money home and keep it on their own kitchen table and have it for their own use.

But I got to say, you know, the PST actually had an impact on the—those that are on limited and fixed incomes. The increase to the PST and the broadening of the PST had a significant impact in terms of that, well, and I think, if I remember correctly, I saw a quote from the member opposite saying exactly that before he was in the position that he's in now. I think we maybe share some of those concerns because it has a significant impact on a number of households.

That said, returning to the second part of the question regarding private schools. There are 60 funded independent schools with an estimated

eligible enrolment of 12,973 pupils for the 2016-17 school year. That was estimated, of course; the actual enrolment is just slightly less than that, 12,907. So for 2016 the independent schools will receive 50 per cent of the public schools division for 2014-15.

So this is not a simple formula, as you appreciate. Net operating expenditures or \$5,545 per eligible pupil. In addition, level 2 and 3 special needs support rates are 9,500 and 21,130 respectively, and curricular material support is roughly \$60 per eligible student. So total funding for the 2016-17 year is projected to be \$74 million, increase of \$2.6 million or 3.6 per cent over the '15-16 funding of \$72 million.

**Mr. Kinew:** Just so I understand correctly, the percentage increase he's referring to is on the overall amount of money; it's not on the per-pupil grant rate?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, thanks. I just asked for clarification.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Excuse me. You want to repeat that for the record; we didn't catch it all, the question.

**Mr. Kinew:** Going back? Okay, yes. So I asked for clarification on whether or not the number the minister is referring to in terms of percentage increase is over the full amount, not the per-pupil grant. Then I see him nodding in the affirmative so we can move on then.

**Mr. Wishart:** Yes, I'll just, for the record, yes, the answer is yes.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister tell us what the amount of money devoted to the smaller classes initiative will be for this year?

**Mr. Wishart:** This is—was a—as the member may or may not know, it was a five-year initiative, and we're getting actually to the last year. So the additional funding for this initiative this year for teachers specifically was \$3.0 million—\$3 million.

**Mr. Kinew:** What is the minister's plan for this program going forward?

**Mr. Wishart:** I appreciate the member's question in regards to that. This was a five-year initiative for smaller class size, K to 3. We are certainly now at the end of, will be at the end of that this year. We'll be evaluating where we are at. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but we were certainly in the mid to high 80s in terms of achieving the goals, per cent-wise. So we'll be looking at whether this

additional year and these additional dollars get us to the target level, and then we'll be evaluating where we go to from there. It's a little early to do that, of course, and we'll certainly be looking at how that might work into our party's interest and commitment to working with early years, in particular, for better reading results, because there'll be some initiatives in regard to trying to deliver on that as well so that we hope to get better results. Certainly we're of the opinion that better ability to read will have positive impacts all the way through the system for a number of years, and certainly hope that it'll contribute in the end to better overall results for our Manitoba education system.

And, as I said, our target is to be not only as provincially the most improved province, but to have an increase in the education results, particularly when it comes to reading.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, sure, I'll follow up on that.

Could the minister provide details on the, you know, enhancements to the reading programs in the province that are going to be undertaken?

**Mr. Wishart:** I thank the member for the question, but we are still in the consultation and development stage in regards to that.

There, again, I must remind the member we are seven weeks into a program to—government, and so—but we've had lots of advice offered to us in regards to this not only from private individuals in—across Manitoba who certainly want to see a better focus on better results for children, but a number of teachers have reached out to us to express their opinion that we are right to have a focus in these early years.

In fact, I think probably the most common comment that we have been getting from a number of the teachers that besides literacy, we should probably be including numeracy in the discussion. And that may be something that we're able to do. Our initial thinking was focus in one area, try and get good results in one area and then work from that, but perhaps we can do two things at the same time. That'll certainly be something that we're looking at. They always say that men aren't really good at multitasking; we'll have to work very hard to try and do a little better on that.

**Mr. Kinew:** Actually going to be my next question: What about numeracy? So I'm encouraged to hear that the minister is perhaps broadening the scope of what's being considered and that's now going to be examined.

Has there been any consideration in terms of, you know, the budgetary impact for what the literacy, and perhaps in the numeracy, programs will be?

**Mr. Wishart:** Of course, as—we're still in the point of not having passed the 2016 budget. It's probably a little premature to talk about 2017 budgets, which would be where a program like this might well be coming into play.

But I can tell the member that our government is very focused and very committed to continue good funding of the education system in line with the rate of economic growth of the province. So I—you know, I think that's a very general comment in terms of additional dollars, but we will be looking at the cost of specific programs and how we might incorporate them into the system.

It isn't always about extra dollars. It's sometimes about changing focuses and providing additional training and things like that, which do often come at cost. But there are some programs out there that have been used and some of them in the French part of the education system that, though they improved, certainly, the outcome in regards to ability to speak French, they actually seemed to surprisingly improve people's numeracy at the same time, which, you wouldn't initially make that connection.

So we'll be looking at some of the opportunities that are out there. I think the member knows that there are a number of different approaches to early years education, and perhaps some of them would provide us with better results. We are certainly focused on trying to get better results in the early years not just because of earlier numbers, but because we really believe that getting kids off to a good start in early years and through the elementary system actually keep them in school more often. We lose far too many kids early on in high school years, and on many cases it's associated with just struggling right through the elementary years and then, finally, by the time they get to the high school situation, things get overwhelming for them. So if we can get them on a better basis earlier on, I think that we'll see surprisingly better results in terms of the education system.

\* (15:50)

I know the member probably shares my concern that, in particular for indigenous and First Nations, that some of the high school graduation rates aren't very good. And that is something that is also a

significant priority for this government, that we want to get better results and a significant improvement in that area. And I would certainly look for advice from the member if he has any specific thoughts in that area. I know he worked in the post-secondary system when he was part of the education system, but I'm sure he appreciates the fact that we have to get graduates from high school before they get to the post-secondary system. So we'll certainly look at that.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, maybe I'd just offer one comment to pick up on a few points that the minister raised about French language education and about indigenous education.

There are two Ojibway immersion schools in the Midwestern US, in Minnesota and Wisconsin. So they focus on indigenous language immersion, and yet, their students, studying in Ojibway full time, score better than statewide average at—in English and in math on the standardized testing in their jurisdictions. So similar kind of parallel phenomena to what he was describing in the French language system where increased improvement in one area can also lead to better results in another area that may not, on the surface, to be directly related. So I know there's a few bilingual programs under—or, soon to be launched in Winnipeg, both with indigenous languages and also with, I believe, Spanish. So, potentially, you know, there'll be some opportunities to learn from the results that we see there as well.

I guess on a related note, if I could ask a few questions about the Aboriginal Education Directorate. I'd like to know what the status is of the Manitoba Aboriginal Languages Strategy that the AED had undertaken.

**Mr. Wishart:** I thank the member for the question. We're certainly working co-operatively with a number of different areas in terms of developing the Aboriginal Languages Strategy.

And I should, before I forget, reference the member's comment about the new Aboriginal schools. I think we're all very interested to see how that might improve results and the opportunities that that might provide Manitoba students, particularly Aboriginal students. And hopefully it will lead to some better results, and it would be very interesting, I think, to do some assessment of the literacy, numeracy early in that process and then have, a few years down the road, to actually have—measure as to how the—how much impact that it has and in what regard. Because, as you mentioned, it's shown on the

US, and we've seen something similar here. Perhaps we should have a special look at that.

But returning to the Aboriginal Languages Strategy, we're working with a number of different school divisions and some post-secondary institutions, looking at opportunities where we can share resources to make this as efficient and as cost-effective as possible, what types of research we could put in place so that we do a proper evaluation, as we just talked about, and what opportunities could be generated out of that in terms of communications and what material needs to be put together. We're also looking at ways we can do that jointly as much as possible.

And probably—well, we'll certainly have to look at teacher education as a big element of that, as well. That is always a challenge because there are a number of new teachers coming into the system every year that may well have been exposed to that, but we'll also have a number of existing teachers that we'll have to work to and provide the additional resources that they might well need to do their job better in the future.

**Mr. Kinew:** And are there any dedicated dollars going toward supporting the Aboriginal Languages Strategy? If so, how much?

**Mr. Wishart:** Of course, as the member appreciates, we have increased funding all across the whole system. But this year it's more of a development year in this particular area, so there is not a specific budget line for this.

We do hope that, once all the material's in place and all the consultations are done, we've identified our partners and see who is all around the table to work with us on this, that there will be additional funding available to help make this program more effective in the future and to launch it on the scale that it needs to be.

But at this point in time, it—we're still very much in terms of developing materials and doing consultation, so additional dollars are just sort of not necessary at this point.

**Mr. Kinew:** I believe the Aboriginal education director had undertaken sort of a survey of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action—calls to action, rather, and, you know, laid out some plans for how they might be implemented.

So I'm wondering if the minister can give us any update on that work, if that's still ongoing or whether

it's been completed. And then also tell us his plan for implementing the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action that, you know, relate to the education system.

**Mr. Wishart:** I do have, actually, a copy of our assessment on the recommendations just right handy, actually. But I can tell the member that we're certainly looking—at this point we're looking at how we can best respond to the recommendations. I recognize, of course, that education is actually one of the big players in the whole delivery of Truth and Reconciliation recommendations that we would—our significant lead, I think, it'd be fair to say, in terms of getting the message out there, both in the school system and post-secondaries as well.

So we are looking very carefully at how we can work with—this is a situation—work with partners. This is a situation where you need to find a number of other people to work with you on that. Initiatives from one point without co-operation from the other aren't always very effective. So we are working co-operatively with others and looking at how—what changes we would have to make moving forward. There's quite a significant number of recommendations that touch in some way or the other on the education system, and we will be coming forward, I think, with a bit of a plan—and as much as we can on a number of those.

This isn't going to happen really quickly, as the member appreciates that—but we will begin the initiative as soon as we can, and it's something that I think we'll be working at a number of years into the future. I can tell you that our government is very committed to trying to implement as many of the recommendations as possible.

But our government, in particular, has reached out to a number of Aboriginal First Nations, Metis groups to be very clear that we want to work with them and we want to make sure that this government and they have an ongoing relationship that can lead to better results. We want them to see our government as an opportunity for their future. We're prepared to work with them not only in terms of education but a number 'annover'—a number of 'nother'—other initiatives, including economic opportunities that, frankly, they've been promised a number of times in the past and we have yet to see a significant delivery of in many situations.

\* (16:00)

We do have some First Nations that have stepped forward in terms of urban reserves, of trying

to generate some economic opportunity, or on their own reserves, to generate economic opportunity and also taking over a lot of their own management.

And I actually represent two different reserves that are in that process in Portage la Prairie, in my home constituency. It's a pretty exciting time, actually, for them because they're bringing back a lot of what has been done to them in the past and now finding that they can take control of it in the future. The urban reserve opportunities in Long Plain is one that already has an urban reserve here in the city and also has one in—on—adjacent to the city of Portage la Prairie, and it provides them with a lot of economic opportunities that they simply were—never had access to before. So, we are excited for them and certainly happy to work with them in terms of getting better opportunities.

So, even though Truth and Reconciliation recommendations are certainly a significant part of where we need to go in terms of changing education planning in the future and development of programs, it's only a small piece of the overall puzzle. We need to generate opportunities all across Manitoba.

**Mr. Kinew:** I like to go to Long Plain's urban reserve and gas up because it's like the gas station equivalent of Cheers; it's the gas bar where everybody knows my name, so it's nice to go there and, you know, have a conversation with everyone there and all that. So, point well taken. *[interjection]* Yes, I don't—I hear my colleague from Fort Garry-Riverview shout a name at me. I'm not sure which character I would be though; I'd have to respond to.

Anyway, returning to the question about the TRC, I'm wondering, can the minister table the assessment of the calls to action?

**Mr. Wishart:** I'm not sure I know the answer to that question, whether we can do that. This is—of course, we're all very new at this job, right, you too. This is advice to the minister and as such, I not sure that I can table it for you at this point. But if you wish to—and this is my previous life coming forward as critic saying, if you want to try out and see what—whether you can or not, you can actually apply for it under the freedom of information. I shouldn't be telling you that, right?

But I mean, that will be the decision process that's made there by a third party in that case, and you will find out whether or not it is considered advice to the minister. And if it's not considered

advice to the minister, then it will be released to you. But if it is advice to the minister then it'll be maintained, as has been the case.

I—you know, I certainly will be happy to sit down and discuss some of these things with you, but I must say, much of this is in the early evaluation stage and there's not specific plans forward in every case. And so, it's not—I mean, it's a valuable document in terms of process; it is not going to give you a great deal in terms of we'll be doing this or that, and the timelines around it, which I think is where the member might want to go in the long term. But we'll certainly try and work as much as possible to make this occur as quickly as we can.

I know that there's a certain level of impatience out there on part of First Nations. They want to see some results regarding this and we certainly keep that in mind. You know, we will be working carefully with them to do that.

The member knows that this—I mean, a lot of what is generated out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission represents a problem that has been ongoing for a number of years and certainly we want to try and resolve that as much as possible, but significant changes take time and this is a significant change, and our government is very committed to helping make this happen.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, we can certainly apply under the privacy legislation to get a copy of that. Yes, I'm just curious to see what's in it and where the recommendations from staff are, you know, directing the minister to follow up.

I'd make a quick point, you know, and I'm not presuming anything about what the minister's knowledge is of the calls to action, but, you know, comments today were mainly focused on capacity building within the indigenous community, which is certainly a big part of the TRC calls to action and, you know, building up economic capacity. But there's also quite a few, particularly of the education calls to action, that are geared towards nonindigenous people and towards the mainstream education system as well. So I'd just put that on the record and before the committee here just, you know, so that the minister, you know, continues to be aware that there are reforms recommended to the K-to-12 system, to various aspects of the post-secondary system that would impact all students and including professional development for teachers as well. So leave that on the record.

I think that under The Path to Reconciliation Act that his colleague from Municipal and Indigenous Relations will be tabling a report on the status of the implementation of the TRC calls to action. So I ask whether the minister has, you know, collaborated in the preparation of that document or whether his ministry officials have collaborated in that and whether they know that they have implemented any of the calls to action so far.

**Mr. Wishart:** We have been, as the member knows, in the process of consulting with the minister of Aboriginal and municipal affairs. To his earlier comment, we certainly appreciate that this is more than just an economic initiative, but I keep hearing, I know, when I talk to First Nations, that they have always felt very excluded in the economic process. And I think that it's important that we actually reference that fairly frequently, that this is an opportunity for them.

That said, education is clearly one of the significant players in terms of making sure that Manitoba society changes because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And I think if we don't get a change in thinking, we didn't accomplish very much. So that is certainly something that we'll—we're part of. We've already implemented some of the recommendations, particularly in terms of some course curriculum initiatives that have been put in there in terms of residential schools in particular. We've also done some teacher development days that are focused around truth and reconciliation recommendations in terms of getting the message out there, professional development days, and continue to do that. I think there's considerable number of opportunities.

We—as much as possible, we'll try and build into the regular business of the education system the recommendations of Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That's what was intended. Part—it'll be part of the mainstream education process. And that is certainly a direction we will continue to work on in the future. It is very important, I think, to Manitobans that we develop that relationship, that understanding that seems to have escaped us in the past in regards First Nations and, in particular, the period of time that's represented by the residential school period. And, certainly, I've talked to a number of individuals in my community that were impacted by that. We did have a residential school in the Portage la Prairie area, not being a true residential school in that it was a day school more than any, but even that had significant impact on a number of

individuals. And some remember it with some degree of fondness; others do not remember it well at all. It certainly had the same mode of action in terms of trying to erase some memories in terms of the impact of different cultures, and that is not something that is acceptable these days, and I'm actually very pleased that we're moving forward trying to deal with that.

\* (16:10)

I think it's important for my own community in a major way, because we have a significant First Nations population and a significant Metis population in our community as well, but I think it's really important for Manitoba that we reach out and we try and get the involvement. And as the member has said, education is certainly one of the leads on this and I think that that's a good place to start.

But it is far more than just education in the early years and through the education system. It is actually involvement and engagement all the way at all levels, including the economic levels, provides the opportunity.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'd like to ask some questions about post-secondary now.

To begin, I'd like to know whether the minister has issued new post-secondary funding letters—or new funding letters to the post-secondary institutions in Manitoba since the election.

**Mr. Wishart:** I know that it's a long afternoon for all of us. We have, in fact, reached out to the post-secondary education and issued new funding letters since we have come into government. Of course, that's often—that's associated with the proposed budget, but certainly we have done that. We are very committed as the—as I have told the member before, to increase funding for post-secondary education in this province at a rate that is in line with the economic growth of the community.

Post-secondary education of all types is certainly very important, so we're, you know, in terms of dealing with the universities and post-secondary colleges, we're certainly looking at increasing funding for there. We're actually finding that, because we're bringing more training in terms of the structure into the department, that this creates some additional opportunities to work more closely together on the training process as well. And we hope that we'll be able to find synergies now and into the future that not only link—will reduce the amount of overall dollars that have to be spent in this system

but also link students much more effectively from training, particularly technical training, to the workplace and provide them with opportunities that—where they can basically come right out of post-secondaries and have a job waiting for them. That's the ultimate goal for many students, and certainly we think that there's room for improvements in regards to that.

We had some discussion, actually, with Northern Sector Council not too long ago that indicated an interest to have some courses taught through University College of the North that might work for them. That would certainly be outside of what was the normal, but provides opportunities for getting a number of people into the workplace much more efficiently.

So we're looking for opportunities that the differing departmental structure offers us, and I think there are significant there.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister table those funding letters?

**Mr. Wishart:** As these letters reflect a budget proposal that has not yet passed, we probably can't table them until at such a point we know that—for certain the budget will be passed. Maybe the member could offer me some assurances in that regard, and then we might be able to do something different. But they have just actually very recently gone out, and I have always been of the opinion that the institutions should be the first ones to hear. And so, we will certainly be making sure that, at some point in the future, once the—this—these pass, this will become available and the member can certainly ask for them at that point in time.

**Mr. Kinew:** Certainly happy to reassure the minister that his party still enjoys a majority of seats in the House. And so I think that, you know, unless there's something new that the minister doesn't know—or, the minister knows that I don't know, rather, then maybe there's, you know, some uncertainty about the passage of the budget, but I'll digress on that point for now.

Couple points related to the post-secondary funding. I think that, previously, an additional \$1 million to the base operating grant for the University of Winnipeg had been committed. Is that \$1 million for the increase to the base operating part of the new funding for U of W?

**Mr. Wishart:** The member's asking about the increase, if I might be clear, on the base operating

grant, which is recognition, I think, the fact that, historically, University of Winnipeg's funding formula was a little off with the rest of the funding formulas for other universities in the province. And I can confirm for him that the increase is actually 1.5, and that that is in our budget.

But, as to the member's comment, we certainly still do enjoy a majority in the House, and I'm sure he understands that. But I would also remind him that, even though in minority, we managed to make the other government wait quite a long time to get their budget passed.

So, I'm not suggesting, of course, at the moment that he might want to employ some of the same strategies that were used by our government in the past, but I can tell you it can be done. And certainly, it was—and I know the member wasn't sitting in the House then, but I'm sure the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) will be quick to tell you that things in this House are not always quite as predictable as they seem, and that, certainly, there are strategies that can be used by members and parties to take quite different timelines and generate, certainly, significant public interest in areas.

Thank you.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, I appreciate all the advice and inside baseball that I'm getting from the minister, but I'm not sure the First Minister would be pleased if we—he finds out he has to be in the Estimates process longer than is currently planned.

I think, previously, there had also been \$50,000 per post-secondary institution earmarked towards new indigenous education initiatives. Can the minister confirm whether those funds, I guess totalling to \$350,000, is still part of the budget plan?

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly, I think the member is aware that there has been an agreement signed between the post-secondary institutions and ourselves as to how we would move forward on this.

And the baseline funding for post-secondary was increased 2 and a half per cent across the board, and so we're certainly working very closely with the institutions to make sure that everything is implemented as was agreed. We're committed to that, but as we move forward, it isn't always about dollars. It's often more about material and linkages and partnerships and making sure that we're all co-operating to get the same message out there. And

we will continue to do that, work with them. And the baseline funding, certainly it will help in the process and that everyone has more dollars to work with.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the—there is not the additional \$50,000 per post-secondary institution, is that correct?

*Mr. Scott Johnston, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mr. Wishart:** We certainly support the blueprint that has been in place between the post-secondary institutions and the School Boards Association here in Manitoba. We are working with them very carefully to make sure that everything is put in place as quickly and efficiently as possible.

But we have, as part of the general funding, increased funding for this initiative as in the 2 and a half per cent, and so specific dollars or specific line item for this is not in the budget.

**Mr. Kinew:** I thank the minister for the clarity of that follow-up answer.

There was a list of \$9 million in programs to post-secondaries that was part of a government press release. Can the minister provide us with the details of the, I guess, proposed programs that would not see funding now as a result of that announcement? Can he provide us with a list of each of those?

**Mr. Wishart:** Because of budget situation and not being passed yet, we can't share any real specifics from this, but as I mentioned to the member before, I mean, our commitment has been to increase base funding by 2 and a half per cent, and that has certainly had a significant amount of increase across post-secondary education.

We have not cut anything from the budget, but some of the promises that were made by the previous government are still actually in the process of being evaluated. And I know the member is probably very tired of hearing the fact that we're evaluating these things, but a lot of them were fairly complicated in the process, and other opportunities, once we started looking at partnerships and ability to work together and the need to deal with some of these, provide us with some opportunities to repurpose existing dollars within our budget to cover a number of these.

So we're still in the process of evaluating that. I can share, certainly, for example, one with the member in terms of the midwife program which made a little bit of press not too long ago. We're working very closely with the University of

Manitoba and the University College of the North to make sure that—it's particularly when the fact that there are students in the program, part-way through, to make sure that we develop something that will be deliverable this year for those students so that they are not in a position where they're unable to make the system—unable to take advantage of what they've already done in terms of education and move forward into the future.

We'll certainly be working closely with a number of our partners in regards to what other funding opportunities can be repurposed and put to use. We're certainly doing evaluations as we move forward, but I would remind the member that we did increase the base funding. Some of the promises that were made were never funded. They had never been through Treasury Board. They were unfunded by the previous government as well, and we have not yet made a commitment on many of them.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, I guess, maybe just beginning with the midwifery program. I understand that, like, there's the base funding for the program; it's some—approximately \$800,000. So that money is included under the current budget, you know, that has been provided to UCN and U of M.

Am I correct in that, the base funding for the program is still there?

**Mr. Wishart:** I can confirm for the member that the base funding is still there, but we do need to have a path forward to take advantage of that. So that's, as I indicated earlier, that we're—been very engaged with both the University of Manitoba, who have been delivering at least an element of this program in the last three years already so—as to how they can become a more major player in that.

We want to be sure that, whatever training these people involved in the program, students involved in the program, get is something that leads to a recognition that they have achieved the goal that they need, that they actually can be recognized by the College of Midwives. And, certainly, there was concern in regards to that. So we want to make sure that we can work with the University of Manitoba and University College of the North in a way that provides training that the College of Midwives actually will recognize so that we end up with the students receiving recognition and graduation, a degree that gives them recognition and that meets the need of the community, but is a sustainable type of funding program.

We've been through—frankly, if the member looks back, you'll find that in the last 10 years there's been marginal success, would be the polite way to put it, in terms of that program in its original format. So we're trying to make sure that we put something in place that provides a level of stability and predictability and a significant number of graduates. There is some discussion about how many midwives are needed in Manitoba, but, certainly, if we can—the original concept of having them in many of the northern communities would, certainly, if it actually is pursued and reaches a point where the regional health authorities are prepared to fund it, there is a great number of opportunities in that.

At this point, if you look at the number of vacant positions under regional health authorities, it's actually a reasonably small number, but I think that that's something that would be increased in the future if the supply was there in terms of midwives.

\* (16:30)

We have not trained a lot in Manitoba. In fact, if you look at the midwives working in this province, you'll find that most of them were trained in other jurisdictions. And so training from our own—for our own people to go back to their own community would be kind of an ideal solution if we could get to that point.

We certainly need to work more closely with both of the training institutions to make sure that we're able to do that and then, perhaps, that message would get through to the health authority that now we have a viable alternative that can be put in place and then that will, in turn, generate more opportunities for the midwives that are trained.

**Mr. Kinew:** So there was an additional \$844,000 over the base grant that was announced under the previous government, though not approved by Treasury Board, I believe, for a joint program between UCN and the U of M. So am I correct in saying that that 844,000 additional dollars specifically for a joint program is not in the current budget?

**Mr. Wishart:** The money that the member is referring to was actually really designed to increase from a biennial intake to an annual intake in terms of the program. I think the member probably appreciates the fact that given the fact that the problem in terms of course structure has caused us to have to restructure the whole program to some degree, and we're still in discussions with University

College of the North and University of Manitoba, that moving to an annual intake in terms of additional students, when you can't deal with the biennial intake, would have not been a very good move. I think we need to develop a sustainable program before we push additional funding through it and actually look for more students.

And I made reference in my previous comments about the fact that actually, when you look at the number of vacancies, it's not a very great number, which surprised us, frankly, when we looked at it. But I think that that is, as I indicated, a little bit of—of the function of the regional health authority knowing that they do not have supply and therefore trying not to develop a demand.

In regards to that, I recognize that there are many communities in the North that would very much like to have someone that is trained as a midwife in their community, but what the structure of that training would be and what the nature of their training would be is something that, actually, I think we have to have a long, hard look at, and that is part of the discussion that is going on right now.

Perhaps what we really need in those communities are nurses that are trained as—with an additional midwives course rather than midwives themselves, because, certainly, there's a need in every community for nursing and in many of these communities it's tough for them to find nurses and many of them are there under contract and in and out in the communities. So the nature of filling that need might change from midwives alone, stand-alone midwife positions, to something that is more an evolution of nursing.

Certainly, I think the member appreciates—I know he has a young family as well—that you want midwives there at the critical time and so they need to be actually present in a community to make them valuable. So kind of a different approach than we have seen in terms of the initiatives in the past and, I think, maybe one that is better in terms of meeting the need in the long term. So that is part of the discussion that is going on right now.

**Mr. Kinew:** By a similar, I guess, token, is the \$450,000 for Assiniboine Community College's internationally educated licenced professional nurse program not included in this budget?

**Mr. Wishart:** In regards to the program that—nursing program that the member referenced, certainly we have—we know we have a nursing need in the

province, and we are working very carefully with other partners in regards to how we move forward with this, especially for the international trained nurses that have come to Manitoba.

There's a significant number of them that are at some point in the system, and, of course, getting recognition of their credentials is part of the process. We had a meeting not too long ago, actually, with the—what's her, don't know the—*[interjection]* yes, with the Fairness Commissioner regarding how best to work on some of these initiatives. And there's some discussion with the college of nurses because of that, how to work to provide the opportunities.

We're working with Manitoba Health and the federal government because many of these individuals have come into Manitoba on immigration programs, and there are some obligations, of course, with the federal government in regards to that. We're look—working with them closely to how best keep this program—move it forward. And so we're looking for opportunities and partnerships in terms of moving this program forward in the future.

We recognize the need for this program. It was an unfunded initiative there previously, so we're certainly looking for opportunities to find ways to make it happen, but we have yet to resolve all of those.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I'm—thanks, Mr. Chair. So I am correct in saying it's not included under this year's budget.

**Mr. Wishart:** I think the member knows that we had increased funding to post-secondary education and that is certainly funding that is available to do this type of thing, but we are still in process of focusing on how we can best do this in the existing formats that we have in looking for partners to work with us very closely on this.

**Mr. Kinew:** Similar question regarding the \$440,000 announcement for the Manitoba Transfer Credit Portal. So my question is: Is that program, the \$440,000 for a Manitoba Transfer Credit Portal, included in this budget?

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Wishart:** I recognize the value of the portal concept. It is certainly something we're working very closely with the post-secondary institutions on how to make work.

We're still in the process of fine-tuning this, so it was probably premature to move forward too quickly

on this anyway. We are looking at other alternatives in terms of where the dollars might come from in the future, but at this point it is something that is not in this budget. And we think that, actually, by the time we get done the fine-tuning, that the opportunities will be more in line with another fiscal year.

**Mr. Kinew:** I thank the minister for the frank answer to the question.

There was \$1 million in capital support for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba that was previously announced.

Is that money in the budget?

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly the member knows that that actually was part of the University of Manitoba's Front and Centre campaign. And we are certainly in-continuing to be in discussion with the 'university' of Manitoba, but as things are progressing to this date, we're doing it on a proposal-by-proposal basis.

No proposal has come in specific to that particular project at this point in time, so we'll certainly look at it when the time comes, but we're—we have not yet received a specific proposal regarding that.

**Mr. Kinew:** So perhaps we could talk about the U of M Front and Centre campaign, then. And I appreciate the minister's comment that those—that that funding will be done on a proposal-by-proposal basis.

So, previously, Mr. Chair, there had been \$150 million in total funding earmarked towards the U of M's Front and Centre initiative, I believe, over seven years.

Does that mean that all of those \$150 million in various commitments will now be reconsidered on a proposal-by-proposal basis?

**Mr. Wishart:** I think the member knows that the \$150 million was, certainly, a broad scale commitment that was made and agreed to by the provincial government just before the election campaign. And it was viewed by many people, frankly, as not much more than an election promise. And it was not ever an all-at-one-time funding commitment by government; it was over seven years, as you have made reference to.

Effectively, contribution agreements would have been signed year by year on any one of those, so we would have been looking at, in reality, with any

government, a year-by-year review of project proposals as they were brought forward, and that's pretty much the situation that we're looking at now.

We are in fairly frequent contact and discussion with the University of Manitoba. We've certainly worked with them on a couple of projects already that are moving along this pathway. But no, nothing has been specifically announced if I remember correctly at this point in time. But it is project-by-project proposal for the \$150 million and the projects within that.

That does not mean that specific initiatives will not be funded. You know, I know the member would like to reassure all his contacts and constituents that every nickel that they promised either before or during the election campaign will be spent. We're not really here as a government to keep those promises, we're here to keep promises to Manitobans that we made.

And that—included in that promise was an evaluation of every dollar that was spent, especially project-specific dollars, and that's what we will be doing.

**Mr. Kinew:** I take the minister's point that, you know, they're not responsible for things undertaken by the previous government. However, I would point out that these are something more than election promises. And in fact, these are commitments that were used to leverage private donations. And I think we saw an update earlier this week that said that some \$352 million, somewhere in that ballpark—*[interjection]* Two eighty-four? Two ninety-four, not—I'm sorry for the digression there, Mr. Chair, just trying to respond to what I'm hearing from across the Chamber.

I believe that, you know, the point stands that the \$150-million commitment was used to leverage private donations, and so there is, you know, potential impact on the, you know, fundraising capability of the University of Manitoba. The \$150 million figure has been included in their tallies to date, and it does figure into the \$500 million goal that they've set for the Front and Centre campaign. So I'm a little confused that the minister is telling us that things will proceed on a project-by-or proposal-by-proposal basis, rather, but that he also does acknowledge that there is this \$150 million figure.

So does there continue to be a commitment on the part of the provincial government to devote \$150

million towards the University of Manitoba's Front and Centre campaign?

**Mr. Wishart:** Just to be correct, the press release earlier the week said the University of Manitoba raised \$394 million, so I was out by \$100 million. You were out by a different number, but yes.

But that's where they're at now, and—which is very good on their part, but I would remind the member opposite that the \$150 million that the previous government had committed to was never funded, never been through Treasury Board, was an unfunded liability—if you want to call it that—made by their government. That said, I do recognize that the University of Manitoba has raised money based on a—what was perceived to be a contribution.

Much of it, actually, when you look at the specifics, is project-by-project money. So that still actually—when we work with them on a project-by-project basis, can still work for them in terms of specifics. The—over the seven years—that's quite a long period of time and, of course, things can change quite a bit during that seven year process, but we're certainly committed to working with University of Manitoba towards project-by—on a project-by-project basis towards the goal that they had in mind.

But we have not made a blanket commitment as the previous government had done. That commitment was totally unfunded, and I think many Manitobans knew that. That said, you know, that the funding—fundraising at the University of Manitoba initiated does very frequently reference that number, but we have worked with the university on a very close basis to make sure that they understand our position in terms of project-by-project, and we will continue to do that as we move forward.

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Kinew:** Okay, so just a point of clarification, and it's a genuine thing that I'm not totally clear on, by which to say I'm not trying to score any sort of partisan point here. The master's in indigenous social work program, I believe, was in the budget and Throne Speech this year. Is it—is that program not part of the provincial contribution to the Front and Centre campaign?

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mr. Wishart:** The master's of indigenous social work was a program that—we actually moved funding around within our own department because we felt it was a priority and did find the funding for it. It was

not actually part of the Front and Centre campaign. However, you know, we might count that as part of the contribution. But we are actually very pleased that we're able to find the dollars and recognize that this was a priority for our government.

We—we're very aware of the number of kids in care in this province and the fact that there needs to be a different solution found to help with that. And we hope that social workers that are trained with an indigenous background and a better understanding of the indigenous community can actually be a significant contribution in terms of dealing with that number.

Previous government had an ongoing problem with children in care, and over the period of a number of years, the 17 years, going back, actually, to 2003 when the number started going up in children in care in a fairly dramatic way, they really didn't deal with it. And I think the member understands that. I suspect he has run into a number of people that are—and hopefully they got to the post-secondary level—that are graduates of CFS, if you want to call it that. I certainly have. And not all have turned out well, and I think anything that we can do as a government and as a society in terms of dealing with the pressures that are on these children, to make sure that their life actually gets back on track, is something that we should try and do.

I think it's a significant social issue for Manitobans, as is the burden of the 11,000 children in care. That's not just those children; that's families. That's a lot of families out there. I know it's not 11,000 families, because there's often multiple children, but that's a lot of families that face undue pressure because of things that happened to them and the supports not being in place. And I can give the member quite a lengthy list of families that I have talked to that have been destroyed because of CFS actions.

I do not—I am not particularly proud Manitoban in regards to the past history of our CFS system here in this province. I recognize the need to protect children in place, but we didn't do anything besides extract them. We just took them out of the household and we did not provide the supports that the family needed, and we certainly didn't provide many of those kids with the types of supports they needed to get on with their life.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'm a, you know, a supporter of the indigenous social work program and, you know, Dr. Michael Hart is a not just a, you know, a good

teacher in terms of social work, but he's also a leading scholar in the field of, you know, indigenous research methodologies and is a leading academic in his own right there, so it's great. That's why I liked the program when it was first announced under the NDP government and—past NDP government. Sorry to my colleagues in Point Douglas and St. Boniface. But yes, you'll find no quarrel with me about that.

I believe that the chair in palliative care, which was part of the Front and Centre commitment, was previously approved by Treasury Board. So does that program still get funded, or when the minister characterized all the \$150 million as not having gone through Treasury Board, does that mean that there's been a change there? Can the minister provide some clarity?

**Mr. Wishart:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I think we may have to do a little follow-up on this one. According to the material we have, it was not approved as a Treasury Board minute, so it would fall into the same category. If the member has additional information that suggests otherwise, I'd certainly be interested in seeing that, but the chair in palliative care at this point falls into the Front and Centre campaign and is a project-by-project approval basis and we have not seen a project proposal around that one, don't think.

And just to add to that, if I might, it was a Manitoba Health initiative, so perhaps that question should go to them. Perhaps it was approved under their funding, but it was certainly not approved under ours.

**Mr. Kinew:** Seeing as how the University of Manitoba has undertaken, you know, quite a bit of public fundraising activities and they've made various announcements, does the minister still, sort of, have a, you know, a framework under which the contributions to the Front and Centre campaign would move forward? I've seen in their announcements, for instance, that they have divided up their, you know, \$500-million fundraising target into various areas including Indigenous Achievement, Research Excellence, Places and Spaces and so on. Does the minister still have a plan to be able to contribute to each of those various initiatives that form the Front and Centre campaign?

**Mr. Wishart:** Welcome back.

In terms of the general structure that they have put forward in terms of project initiative, that still exists, but it is broken down, as the member knows, into various projects all the way through and

we will certainly continue to look at it project-by-project basis. We are asking for some additional information on some of these projects in terms of long-term economic impacts and things like that as well, as well as the number of people involved, so we will continue to work going forward on a project-by-project basis as we had indicated we would all the way along.

And so, the different initiatives in terms of the different categories, indigenous, whether they're Places and Spaces, or Outstanding Student Experience or anything like that, the priorities for that will, to some degree, depend on the University of Manitoba and to which ones they prioritized. And a number of that, I know, is probably connected to the donations they get, because they have certainly made us aware of the fact that some of the donations were for specific things, and they're certainly working with those donors to make sure that everything's understood in terms of the process, and that's moving forward.

So, we continue to have discussions, actually fairly frequently, with the University of Manitoba on regards to this. We will maintain that relationship and hope that we can work with them in terms of how to meet the needs of specific donors, and that does have an impact, of course, on the costs of the—of an—a particular initiative and the cost-sharing in that particular initiative, and that will certainly be a factor in the project proposal and how it is viewed in the future. So it's part of the whole process in terms of how projects would be approved.

\* (17:00)

**Mr. Kinew:** Which proposals under the Front and Centre campaign have been received, or which of the projects have—has the ministry received proposals for?

**Mr. Wishart:** We as I have said have dealt with this on a project-by-project proposal. There are a couple of projects that we are in the process of looking at right now. So nothing has reached the point where it's been announced, or you would've heard it as well. And that has certainly not occurred yet, so we will continue to work on them on a proposal-by-proposal basis. But I can share with the member that proposals have come forward and we are in the process of doing these evaluations as we speak.

But, as I mentioned earlier, I think it's very appropriate that proponents always hear before

anyone else does, so I think that's certainly where it remains.

**Mr. Kinew:** So just to be clear for the sake of, you know, my understanding, so none of the proposals that would form part of the U of M Front and Centre campaign have been currently been approved?

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite.

We are evaluating some of the proposals at the moment. Nothing is completed at this point in time. So I hope that gives the minister—the member, sorry—the information that they need.

**Mrs. Colleen Mayer (Chairperson of the section of Committee of Supply meeting in room 255):** Mr. Chairperson, in the section of Committee of Supply, meeting in room 255, considering the Estimates of the Department of Families, the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), moved the following motion:

THAT item 9.1(a) the minister's salary be reduced to \$37,000.

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 recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

*All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.*

\* (17:10)

#### **Recorded Vote**

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. The section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255, considering the Estimates of the Department of Families, the honourable member of St. Johns moved the following motion: that line item 9.1(a), the minister's salary, be reduced to \$37,000.

This motion was defeated on a voice vote, and, subsequently, two members requested a formal vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine).

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 14, Nays 30.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The motion is accordingly defeated.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The section of the Committee of Supply will now continue with the consideration of the departmental Estimates.

We'll call back in the staff for the minister and the critic.

We'll presume the committee of Estimates for the Department of Education and Training, and we'll also get everyone seated here for the staff.

And the floor is open for questions.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister for Education tell us what the criteria are for the evaluation of the—for the proposal-by-proposal evaluation for the U of M Front and Centre campaign?

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable minister, please.

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

And I suspect that every evaluation is going to be—I mean, we're all, like, always asking slightly different questions with each different project proposal. But big picture, I mean, we're also looking for information on economic impact, economic benefits, social benefits. So, under every one of the different project proposals and different categories, some are Infrastructure alone, to different branches. Some are Health. Some are Education related; actually, quite a few are Education related.

So the criteria is going to be a little bit variable. We don't have a standard format. I suspect, as we move forward and work our way through the project proposals, that we'll be able to develop a format that works, particularly in specific areas that were brought forward that—some of them may be one-offs, and others are going to be ones that, hopefully, we can work with the university on and to make sure that they are able to get—to make their lives as easy as possible, too, in terms of the amount of work that—I got to remind the member, I mean, these firsts of many of them were election promises that the funding for this—but this, he's also talking about a government that ran, really, a record deficit for a number of years and, finally, got a government into—their government into a position where they had a deficit of more than \$1 billion. I don't—I know they protest about that, but the reality is pretty easy to find on the books and, certainly, a lot of people were wondering whether that number would be greater than that.

And that didn't include the \$600 million worth of election promises that were made during the campaign, so I think, you know, in terms of being—

trying to change the whole fiscal horizon for this province is something that is important to Manitobans. I think that we have to get this province onto a keel that is much more sustainable in terms of fiscally responsible than what had been seen before.

But, that said, I mean, we have been very clear that education is one of our priorities. Not only in K to 12, but in post-secondary, and I think the member recognizes that from the fiscal commitments that we have made, the funding commitments that we have made. I appreciate the member's comments earlier about the social consequences of everything that we do, and we're trying to bring that into the picture in a significant way and make sure that those are weighed, as well.

So it's a combination of factors which, in terms of decision-making process, have to be weighed very carefully. And we will certainly endeavour to do our best in terms of trying to make good decisions for all Manitobans, even related to every particular project.

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, I can't resist pointing out that the \$1-billion deficit figure that the minister's referring to was in the budget tabled by his Finance Minister and his Premier (Mr. Pallister), so I just want to put that on the record, there.

\* (17:20)

So, moving back to the discussion that we were having. Is there a timeline, like a closing date with respect to these projects? Like, I know the U of M Front and Centre campaign is tied to certain timelines. Has the minister committed to, you know, abiding by those timelines as well, or this is, you know, just an independent process and we'll just proceed regardless of what U of M is doing?

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly, in terms of the billion dollar deficit, you can claim more than a billion if you want, but I'd suspect that that's where, a number that people would believe far more than less. There was simply nothing in anything that we saw that indicated that you were going to come in anywhere near the \$600 million that you had, in terms of an interim fiscal statement, had admitted to.

And if you look back historically—and I'm sure the member's quite capable of having a look at these numbers—he would find that the previous government had a history of being well beyond their projected deficits. I don't think there's too many people out there that don't believe that the potential for a billion dollar deficit was very real. And,

frankly, I think that on April 19th, many people certainly expressed an opinion in regards to that.

That said, regarding your, the rest of your question about project proposals and timelines, there's really nothing in this change in methodology—if you might call it that—as to how we're looking at the Front and Centre campaign on a project-by-project basis that would change the timeline unless the university made the choice to change the timelines. We're working with them as they're really driving this particular process very much, and we're working very cooperatively with them. But we are asking them for additional information and trying to make sure that any public dollars that go into these are well spent. And I think that's an obligation that we made to Manitobans and one that we intend to keep.

I have, certainly, heard from a number of Manitobans that want to be sure that their tax dollars are being well spent, but I've also heard from a lot of Manitobans that want to be sure that we get good value in education. And the member knows that some of the, especially the K to 12 system, that the education results were disappointing in terms of the direction that they're going. And that is something that we have committed to try and reverse. And we working very diligently to do that. There'll be some new proposals come forward to try and improve measurable results. And we will work very closely with a number of stakeholders in regards to that, including Manitoba teachers.

And, hopefully, we get good cooperation from Manitoba parents, too, because I think that's the group that I hear from the most in regards to the results is the parents. They were disappointed that the trends were in the wrong direction and I think that's something that we need to find mechanisms to make—to improve on that.

I—as I said earlier, the member knows that our graduation rates amongst indigenous students were disappointing, especially when you compare them to other jurisdictions. That's an area that this government is extremely committed to trying to improve upon. There's a range of programs out there now, some of which we hope will yield results. But we will be evaluating them, as well, and trying to look at ways to make them work more efficiently and make sure that they're continuous slated programs so that there's no places there where young indigenous people in the school system will fall through the cracks and not have their opportunity to graduate.

**Mr. Kinew:** There was \$150,000 to support a Metis studies program and Brandon University that was previously announced. Is the specific money to support that program at BU in this budget?

**Mr. Wishart:** We've had discussions with Brandon University and the Metis Federation in regards to that, and that program proposal needed quite a bit of further development, and as such, it is really gone—going back through that process. We will certainly be looking at it as it comes forward in the future, but as I can remind the member, we increased funding for post-secondaries, Brandon University included, by two and a half per cent. And sometimes, it's not always about the money. It's about the priorities.

Brandon University will certainly be looking at their priorities. I know they have good engagement with the Metis community and hope to work closely with them in the future. And we hope to be able to help them in that process, but proposals need to be fully developed. We're not in the business of funding field of dreams, if some might put it that way, and I don't think that's actually quite fair to this program. It just needs some further development, but we want very specific proposals with very specific results and not only in terms of their education capacity but what impact that they may have for Manitobans in the future. So we'll continue to look at this.

I know the Metis community is very supportive of this approach, and we will work with them as well in terms of finding partnerships. I think, particularly with some of the federal—or, sorry, the Supreme Court rulings, I think the member understands that there's a little more federal obligation in the area of Metis communities and a number of non-treaty indigenous communities. I know you made reference—I think it was in your opening remarks—to the Dakotas, who are non-treaty but indigenous people. And following the federal initiatives—or federal Supreme Court, their rulings, there certainly is an obligation on the part of the federal government to contribute more in terms of not only health, but education was part of that.

And so we'll certainly be looking for opportunities to talk to our federal counterparts as to how they might actually help us out in that process. So we'll look for opportunities to do that and to remind the federal government that they have some obligations to the First Nations people of this land.

**Mr. Kinew:** So we've heard a few programs that the minister's referred to as not being funded in this budget. There was 350,000 in—\$50,000 support for

each individual post-secondary institution, so, total, 350. There is the \$440,000 for the Manitoba transfer credit portal. There's the \$450,000 for the Assiniboine Community College internationally accredited LPN program. There was \$1 million from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation capital money. There's this Metis program at BU for \$150,000.

So just going through those, Mr. Chair, were these figures and programs that are attached to them—were these included in that \$9-million amount in—I believe, spending reductions was the word used, that was floated by the Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) a few days after the budget?

\* (17:30)

**Mr. Wishart:** The projects that the member referred to were commitments made by the previous government and were not funded. They would—they hadn't been through Treasury Board. And we have endeavoured as much as possible to include a number of these in other ways in the program, and some, as have been mentioned, have been funded, including the midwife program, which is a major program, and also the social work program—indigenous social work program, which we felt was a very important priority program. But the ones that they—that are not given specific line items are available to the increase in funding. And that becomes a priority with each of the post-secondary institutions.

That said, the member's asking, is that part of the reduction. It is part of the reduction that the Finance Minister referenced.

**Mr. Kinew:** I thank the minister for his frank response.

There is another project proposal that I know is before the department, previously called—and I may—it may be known as a different name, but it's the north Interlake training facility. So, the idea is to have a centralized site where college and university programs from the existing colleges and universities like Red River—potentially one of the universities—could be delivered. Potentially in Hodgson or Fisher Branch or in a region somewhere near Peguis, Fisher River, Fisher Branch, that Interlake area.

So, I'd like to ask whether the minister can give us an update on the status of that, whether there's any funding towards advancing that project, the north Interlake project, in this year's budget.

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

I think what he's referring to was actually made—a promise made during the election campaign. In fact, I think it was the former member for Interlake that was involved in that particular announcement. And certainly, there's interest from some of the communities in that area to have better access to education. I think every part of Manitoba wants to have better access to that, to education. I understand why they were looking for that, but it was a very undeveloped proposal and, certainly, never funded anywhere, was very little more than a campaign promise. In fact, I think it would be viewed as a campaign promise.

We have not had much follow-up from those communities. We are always open to have a discussion with them as how we could best deliver education in every part of Manitoba. Being from rural Manitoba myself, I understand, probably on a firsthand basis, how difficult it is for rural students to come to the education. I know it's actually very frustrating to many rural people.

And they talk about, you know, tuition costs. Tuition is nothing compared to the costs of living away from home for many rural people. And that is certainly a big factor and why I think this community is probably looking at what might be done in the future for them. We would be happy to have discussions with them in the future. But I think the member understands why people in rural areas are particularly focused on getting education close to home as possible, because it costs them quite dearly to take their children out of the community and take them somewhere for an education.

It is one of the realities of our current system, and something you have to plan for as a parent in rural Manitoba. I'm one of those. I mean, certainly, we don't travel as far as some. I have family members in the very extreme southwest corner of Manitoba within two miles of Saskatchewan border and three miles of the American border. And it is quite a significant cost for a family and community in that area to send their kids away to school anywhere in Manitoba, but particularly all the way into Winnipeg. And, frankly, it's almost like living in another province. They don't get to see those kids very often, and it is really a bit of a traumatic change, maybe not as much so as coming out of a northern community where some of the lifestyles are a little different, and certainly the access is even more restricted. But it's still quite a change for kids to

come out of those communities and go to school somewhere else. And so, certainly, the costs of travelling to get an education is a significant one, and that we're—we'll certainly be interested in having discussions with those communities on if there's some other way that we can do that. Especially with trades and training, there is more flexibility in that. As the member knows, some of the schools are geared to deliver programs in different communities at different times, and that has happened in the past, and that'd be something that could be discussed.

**Mr. Kinev:** The minister's correct in saying that this was—this project was part of a campaign promise that was rolled out by the NDP during the last election. However, it's not merely a campaign promise, so hopefully the fact that the NDP campaign announced it as a campaign event doesn't in any way prejudice, you know, the project, because it has been ongoing for a number of years. I believe, like, more than a decade ago is when the genesis of this project began. You know, it came to my attention; I think late last year I sat in on a meeting with the steering committee or the working group, and I believe I shared with them some research that had been conducted about how to effectively support indigenous students who are transitioning into a manufacturing setting, and they thought it would be applicable. So, you know, all that to say that I became aware of the program at the end of 2015 and that I think that over the holidays a proposal was being prepared and that it was submitted to the department probably in early 2016.

So, I'd ask whether the minister, you know, would—if the minister's familiar with the proposal, if it has come to his attention, if not, whether he'd, you know, take a look at it.

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

And yes, I understand that there is a proposal that has come forward to us. We'll have a look at that, and the fact that it was a campaign promise is not a negative. I think I probably indicated in my previous comments that I am very sympathetic to the costs of getting an education for people in rural areas. I have first-hand experience from it, and I certainly hear quite a bit regarding that, and we'll—depending on what they were looking for in terms of capacity in the community, we would be happy to re-engage with them and see if we can find some way forward on the—on this proposal so that—especially, I suspect that there are—you named a few First Nations communities as part of that, and I suspect that at least

a portion of the students involved would be First Nations, and we have been very committed to making sure that we offer opportunities in First Nations education beyond what has historically been there. So that would be something that might well fit in with our interests in that area.

I think, frankly, it's—if they see a route forward, people in rural communities, and—it encourages students to stay in the education system longer. So, this would be something that we could certainly enter into discussions with the communities involved, some of which are First Nations, as we talked about, and look for options and alternatives. Like I said, there are some schools out there now, some colleges out there now, that have programs that they move around the province and offer in different jurisdictions at different times. I know we have some in my own community that are there for a few years and then move on to another community and are offered in those communities for a few years, and they are very popular and certainly taken advantage of. It's all a question of timing, unfortunately, for the student, whether they can take advantage of them when they're in a community and whether they're looking at having to move to another community to take advantage of certainly adds considerably to the costs.

So we would be open to further discussions. In fact, if the member has contact information—we have some contact information I suspect now—we would be happy to re-engage. People change, so if there's something current on that, we would be happy to work with him on that.

\* (17:40)

**Mr. Kinew:** Thank you to the minister for his answer.

There's been a few, I think, infrastructure proposals that went to the provincial department but that have—post-secondary infrastructure, to be specific, but that have also been proposed to the federal government under their special infrastructure fund, which is, I think, specifically earmarked towards, you know, infrastructure projects on post-secondary campuses. A few come to mind, like the next stage of Assiniboine Community College's North Hill development, and then, I believe, University of Winnipeg also submitted a proposal around some kind of green building.

So I'm wondering whether the ministry has heard back yet from the federal government as to whether or not they will support any of these, and then, whether the, you know, Province would then be implicated in, I guess, supporting the capital funding that is attendant with those.

**Mr. Wishart:** I thank the member for the question, and it is a very timely question because we have been dealing with a number of applications.

I think the member may realize that there's—like most cases, there was much more demand than there was available dollars. And, certainly, there's been a lot of back and forth that we were involved with, at least to some degree, between the institutions and the federal government in terms of additional information and things like that.

But no announcements have been made yet because this is a Canada-wide program. It's our belief that actual final announcements on this may be a little while coming yet, though I know that originally the end of June, I think, was the—was supposedly the deadline. So we may not hear final results on this until end of July or perhaps even a little bit later, but we're certainly waiting with a lot of interest as well. It has implications to us not only in terms of commitments that we would make in terms of participating in the funding, but it also has, in some cases, longer term operating commitments that we would have to look at, as well, and have to make sure that we are able to build into the budget for coming years.

So we're encouraged and excited with some of the proposals that we have seen, which included the ones that the member had reference to and many, many more. I think, if I remember correctly, there were nine just from the University of Manitoba, so, definitely oversubscribed, would be the correct terminology for this particular one. But we are hopeful that Manitoba will get a significant amount of the dollars and that that'll improve the quality of post-secondary infrastructure and accordingly will lead to opportunities for better quality education for Manitoba students in the post-secondary system. That's something I think that we're all prepared to support.

As I said earlier, we see education as one of the ways out for Manitobans, and so the more opportunity for better quality education that we can supply and work together with the federal government on, the happier we all are.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister tell the committee whether there's any changes to the Manitoba Student Aid plan for this year?

**Mr. Wishart:** There are no plans to make any changes for the 2016 year. I think the member may recall that during the election campaign the PC party made a commitment to increase scholarships and bursaries, and we are certainly working to do that. But that will take place in the—into the 2017 year.

We've had a few preliminary meetings with different groups. That's one where, of course, we are hopeful to get better participation from the private sector as well. And we have communicated some of this to different post-secondary institutions. And I think it—that the response has been, actually, very positive and the post-secondary institutions will commit more dollars.

But they see the potential to raise more dollars in the community. I think education is an area where many of the businesses in the community are prepared to give back, feeling that it is—it works for them as well to some degree because, of course, they're looking for better trained individuals and more of them. And, you know, being involved in the education process never hurts and gives you a linkage in and that students are certainly very aware, as the member knows, of where scholarships have come from and often express their appreciation by, you know, reaching out to the individuals or companies involved, and that provides everybody with an opportunity to make the linkages that are necessary. And a lot of the businesses are looking for a specific set of skills, and that's why they're funding a particular area, so that develops some linkages.

We also took the initiative of making sure that, because of the fire in Fort Mac, that anyone who was in that community who had a student loan that had to be paid back, that we suspended that so that we could—so that they would have a chance to get their feet back under them, give them an opportunity. It's a traumatic event, as I'm sure the member appreciates, and I think it's responsible of all Canadians to do what they can to help get that community back on its feet.

**Mr. Kinew:** That's interesting. I didn't know that last piece before. So certainly interesting.

Can the minister tell us what the tuition fees for international students will be this year, if there'll be, like—perhaps I could ask that in a better way. Can he tell us what the increases will be this year, if any?

**Mr. Wishart:** I can give the member a little bit of an answer.

We don't have a percentage increase number as such and—because it varies quite a bit from the different faculties and the different universities. I can give him an average tuition for international students in Manitoba in the arts and science area, if that would be of some use to him, and that would be an average of \$13,372. Which would make Canada—or, sorry—Manitoba the third-lowest tuition for both domestic students and international students in arts and science.

But it does vary quite a bit, especially across Canada. And we've certainly been hearing some comments from some institutions that they would—they're getting comments from international students or families of international students that kind of make you wonder whether we have this right or not, where the university's being told it can't be that low. Your quality of your education must not be good if you're only charging that much, and I know that the quality of Manitoba post-secondary education is very good, and so I suspect that many universities are at a point of wanting to review some of these international ones.

It's a mixed blessing because many of the international students do end up becoming immigrants, which is, certainly, something that we are very supportive of. So bringing them in—but we need to charge—they need to pay something that is sort of in the range of the actual cost and that's something that the universities themselves have control over.

So, if the member wants additional information we'll endeavour to do it if he needs it, but that's really what we have.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, that's great. Just as a point of reference that's good.

So, does the minister—am I hearing the minister say that he supports an increase, like a significant increase over the amount of inflation to international student tuition?

**Mr. Wishart:** What you heard me say is that I think everybody's beginning to wonder if we have it in line. I don't support it one way or the other. I think we need to do some evaluation, but we're certainly hearing comments that, and we know that we're the third lowest in Canada. It is not—it's something that we control in terms of what the institution wishes to charge their international students, but we're

certainly hearing some interesting discussion, frankly, as to, you know—if you're discouraging an international student from coming because he thinks we don't have the quality of education, the message is obviously wrong, because we have the quality of education that they would certainly benefit from.

So perhaps we need to package the message—or, the institutions need to package their message differently to make sure that it isn't—they don't get a negative message from the fact that the cost of the education isn't—it certainly isn't in the range of some other even Canadian institutions. And, of course, I know the member knows that education tuition in the US can cost five, six, seven, maybe even 10 times as much down there, and that's certainly not where we want to be compared, but we do want to be compared across Canada and we want international students to understand that, here in Manitoba, even though the costs may be lower, that the quality of the education is every bit as good.

So, certainly there's—the message is obviously not getting out there in the right format. And I suspect that repackaging, rebranding would be probably a more effective tool for some of these institutions if they were to do that and—but that's their choice, not mine, and we'll certainly be available if we can do anything to help them in regards to that, because I think the member knows that international students for some universities are a fairly significant amount of their revenue, and that plays into the whole efficiency of the university in terms of their different revenue sources. If they make revenue from one place then they don't need quite as much or further from another, and that—so we'll certainly be part of that discussion as needed.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, it sounds like the minister has an appreciation for the role that international tuition plays on the funding of the public post-secondaries.

You know, he likely will have to take a position and express it, you know, to the institutions in those conversations because, while there may be the phenomenon that he's describing, there's also the potential that if tuition is too high, it can dissuade certain international students from coming, some of whom are already landed immigrants in other parts of Canada who then come to Manitoba to pursue education because there's a price advantage versus a tuition in other jurisdictions. So there's, you know, many moving parts to that situation.

And it—again, it does factor into the budgetary plans of the post-secondaries, and many of them do

count on international students to drive increases in revenue. So that'll be something that I'm sure that I'll be watching with interest.

I'm wondering, with respect to the overall tuition, can the minister just confirm that the overall increase for post-secondary tuition this year is 1.2 per cent this year over last? Is that right?

**Mr. Wishart:** Regards to the international students, we may well be very close to the same position in that it is, I think, maybe time to have a bit of a discussion from the various institutions. And I think that's really what the member's saying as well.

There's certainly value, and it's not a simple equation that the international students do come from a number of sources. And we certainly want to provide them with a quality education here in Manitoba, whether they stay here in Manitoba as immigrants or go back to wherever they originated to put that education to work for them in that community or that country as well.

And sometimes I wonder if we're doing some countries a favour by taking their best and brightest, training them here, and then perhaps they don't go back to those countries where they are clearly very badly needed in some cases. So, certainly, we have to keep that in mind as part of the whole discussion.

But second—the second part of his question was, was the funding increase 1.2 per cent, and the answer would be yes.

**Mr. Kinew:** And will the tuition next year also be tied to inflation—tuition increase?

**Mr. Wishart:** Well, my ability to predict the future is not actually all that good. I appreciate the member's faith in my ability to do that. There was an offer earlier today to take bets on whether the UK would be in the EEC tomorrow morning or not. You know, if I was good at that I'd be doing that, taking the bets.

But I—at this point in time, we have no plans to make any changes to the process that is out there, and we will continue at this point to work with that assumption into the future.

**Mr. Kinew:** Maybe this is bringing up an issue that we can't resolve in the next two minutes, so maybe I'll just put on the record that I'd like to turn to the plans around early childhood education and discuss

some of that and, you know, some of the plans to educate more people who can help facilitate the increase of child-care spaces in Manitoba and turn to that discussion as well as some other things when we resume shortly.

Maybe we can begin, with the few seconds left on the clock, with a question. What will the amount

of funding be for the Early Childhood Education Unit this year?

**Mr. Chairperson:** The time being 6 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings.

The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 23, 2016

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