

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

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
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, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
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
<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 15, 2017

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### Speaker's Statement

**Madam Speaker:** I have a statement for the House.

May 12th, 2017, marked the 147th anniversary of Manitoba joining Confederation as a province. In honour of this historic occasion, in today's Speaker's parade, the acting Sergeant-at-Arms carried the original Manitoba mace. Carved from the hub of a Red River cartwheel by a soldier of the Wolseley expedition, this mace made its first formal appearance on March 15th, 1871, at the first Legislature of Manitoba, that was held in the home of A.G.B. Bannatyne. Included in the designs carved into the mace are the rose, the thistle, the harp and the fleur-de-lys. The Bannatyne home was destroyed by fire in December 1873; however, thankfully, the mace was saved.

This mace was retired after 13 years of service and has a permanent home on display in the Speaker's Office. Today, it came out of retirement, after 133 years, for this celebration. This important historical artifact was used in today's Speaker's parade to pay tribute to our Manitoba history. The original mace, as well as the Assembly's current mace, will also be on display in the Chamber in their respective cases during the Doors Open event on May 28th and 29th, 2017, and the public of Manitoba is encouraged to visit the Assembly Chamber on those days to see the maces first-hand.

In addition to the original mace, the star-blanket mace cushion and the beautiful beaded mace runner that were gifted to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba by original peoples in 2010, are also on

display today to help celebrate Manitoba Day and to honour Manitoba's Aboriginal heritage.

It also serves as a reminder that this Assembly Chamber and the Legislative Building are on Treaty 1 territory on the traditional lands of the Anishinabe and the homeland of the Metis people.

I hope that adding the first mace to the celebration of Manitoba Day will become an annual tradition.

Thank you.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 33—The Minimum Wage Indexation Act (Employment Standards Code Amended)

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 33, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act (Employment Standards Code Amended), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Cullen:** Madam Speaker, this bill establishes a mechanism to adjust Manitoba's minimum wage every October 1st based on the rate of inflation in the previous calendar year. We look forward to opposition members supporting this legislation.

Thank you very much.

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

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development

##### Sixth Report

**Mr. Scott Johnston (Chairperson):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its Sixth Report.

### Meetings

Your Committee met on May 11, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

### Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 21)** – The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act/Loi sur la responsabilité financière et la protection des contribuables
- **Bill (No. 22)** – The Regulatory Accountability Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act/Loi sur la responsabilisation en matière de réglementation et modifiant la Loi sur les textes législatifs et réglementaires

### Committee Membership

- Mr. ALLUM
- Mr. CURRY
- Hon. Mr. FIELDING
- Hon. Mr. FRIESEN
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. SMITH
- Mr. YAKIMOSKI

Your Committee elected Mr. JOHNSTON as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. YAKIMOSKI the Vice-Chairperson.

### Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 21)** – The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act/Loi sur la responsabilité financière et la protection des contribuables:

Jonathan Alward, Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 22)** – The Regulatory Accountability Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act/Loi sur la responsabilisation en matière de réglementation et modifiant la Loi sur les textes législatifs et réglementaires:

Chris Goertzen, Association of Manitoba Municipalities  
Jonathan Alward, Canadian Federation of Independent Business  
James Battershill, Keystone Agricultural Producers

### Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 21)** – The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Act/Loi sur la responsabilité financière et la protection des contribuables

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, with the following amendments, on a counted vote of 6 Yeas, 4 Nays:

THAT Clause 8 of the Bill be amended

(a) in Clause 8(2) by striking out "or (5)," and substituting ", (5) or (5.1),";

(b) by replacing Clauses 8(4) and (5) with the following:

#### Full payment — no deficit

**8(4)** If the report under section 7 for a fiscal year shows that the government did not incur a deficit, an amount withheld from a person under subsection (2) for that fiscal year is payable to the person for that fiscal year, without interest.

#### Salary reduction — contravening deficit

**8(5)** If the report under section 7 for a fiscal year shows that the government incurred a deficit in contravention of section 4 or 5, the ministerial salary of a person to whom subsection (2) applied for that fiscal year is reduced by the amount withheld for that fiscal year under that subsection.

#### Salary reduction — non-contravening deficit

**8(5.1)** If the report under section 7 for a fiscal year to which section 4 applies shows that the government incurred a deficit that does not exceed the baseline amount for that fiscal year, the ministerial salary of a person to whom subsection (2) applied for that fiscal year is reduced according to the following formula:

$$\text{Reduction} = A \times (\$100,000,000 - B) / \$100,000,000$$

In this formula,

A is the amount withheld for that year under subsection (2);

B is the lesser of \$100,000,000 and the amount by which the baseline amount exceeds the deficit.

*If the amount withheld for the fiscal year exceeds the salary reduction for that year, the excess is payable to the person for that fiscal year, without interest.*

*(c) in Clause 8(6) by striking out "or (5)" and substituting "or (5.1)".*

*THAT Clause 8 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after Clause 8(9):*

***Transitional — 20% of annual ministerial salary to be withheld for 2017-2018***

***8(10) Despite subsection (2), amounts totalling 20% of the annual ministerial salary are to be withheld under that subsection from the ministerial salary otherwise payable to a minister for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.***

- ***Bill (No. 22) – The Regulatory Accountability Act and Amendments to The Statutes and Regulations Act/Loi sur la responsabilisation en matière de réglementation et modifiant la Loi sur les textes législatifs et réglementaires***

*Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment, on a counted vote of 7 Yeas, 3 Nays.*

**Mr. Johnston:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member from Transcona, that the report of the committee be received.

***Motion agreed to.***

### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the Department of Families, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement?

### **Mother's Day**

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** It is with pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak in honour of all our mothers—the role of mothering—in commemoration of Mother's Day, which was celebrated yesterday, on May 14th.

This past Sunday, many families across the province spent quality time honouring the role that their own mothers fulfill as nurturers, caregivers, leaders and role models.

It is important to remember that mothers come in many forms. Families are so diverse and all those who play a mothering role are not necessarily biological mothers. They may be grandmothers, aunts, sisters, friends, stepmothers or mentors. Those who care give selflessly for the ones they love, embody the spirit of mothering and they deserve to be honoured.

Madam Speaker, it is equally important to acknowledge those for whom Mother's Day bring sadness. There are many of us who commemorate mother's day while working through grief and loss: the loss of our own mothers, the loss of children or the loss of the ability to have children.

As mothers, we can feel the pain of other mothers who have experienced child loss. I would particularly like to acknowledge those mothers and caregivers who have experienced the pain and terror of having a missing or murdered child or loved one. One must feel that a day like Mother's Day is impossible to endure, and yet, they continue to bravely—they continue bravely on.

I believe that recognizing the countless, selfless acts of mothers and mothering is critical to acknowledging the value and status of women in our society.

In addition to their roles as mothers, women do so much to lift up and care for their communities, their organizations and their businesses. They 'caretake' for the future: the future of their children, their family, their community and our province.

\* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, in commemoration of this year's Mother's Day, I would like to put out a call to action. As we appreciate, honour and remember our mothers, let us also work to mobilize our energies to better—be better caretakers, to share the joy and responsibility of caretaking for our households, our families, our communities and our province together.

I'd like to acknowledge and welcome all the mothers who are here today in the gallery, and all the mothers who are watching these proceedings at home.

Thank you very much, and thanks to all the mothers who joined us today.

And I'd also like to ask for leave to enter their names into Hansard.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave for the names to be entered into Hansard? *[Agreed]*

*Attending: Carole Bugg–Derek Johnson; Jenny Chudley–Sarah Guillemard; Laurel Robson Curry–Nic Curry; Lydia Ewasko–Wayne Ewasko; Hazel Fletcher–Steven Fletcher; Vera Helwer–Reg Helwer; Margaret Holliday–Sarah Guillemard's grandmother; Constance Mayer–Colleen Mayer; Mildred Smook–Dennis Smook; Annie Teitsma–James Teitsma; Gayle Wharton–Jeff Wharton.*

*Not attending: Grace Bindle–Kelly Bindle; Verna Cullen–Cliff Cullen; Anne Doell–Eileen Clarke; Eleanor Eichler Grauff–Ralph Eichler; Sharon Fielding–Scott Fielding; Esther Friesen–Cameron Friesen; Claire Girardin–Jeff Wharton's mother-in-law; Bernice Graydon–Cliff Graydon; Doreen Isleifson–Len Isleifson; Hazel Johnston–Scott Johnston; Diane Lagassé–Bob Lagassé; Donelda Lagimodiere–Alan Lagimodiere; Dianne Schellenberg–Bob Lagassé's mother-in-law; Diane Martin (deceased)–Shannon Martin; Diane McDonald (deceased)–Heather Stefanson; Olive Michaleski–Brad Michaleski; Val Micklefield–Andrew Micklefield; Georgette Morley–Janice Morley-Lecomte; Shirley Nesbitt–Greg Nesbitt; Jeanette Nurse–Rochelle Squires; Anne Pallister (deceased)–Brian Pallister; Eva Pedersen (deceased)–Blaine Pedersen; Janet Pivniuk–Doyle Pivniuk; Leticia Reyes–Jon Reyes; Kathleen Sawula (deceased)–Cathy Cox; Wanda Schuler (deceased)–Ron Schuler; Diane Stefanson–Heather Stefanson's mother-in-law; Anne Wiens–Kelvin Goertzen; Christina Wishart–Ian Wishart; Olga Wowchuk–Rick Wowchuk.*

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** On behalf of our NDP caucus, I would like to wish all Manitoba mothers a happy belated Mother's Day.

While the role of mothers is not always properly recognized, we know that their sacrifices and contributions are immeasurable and invaluable.

Mother's Day is an important opportunity not only to honour and celebrate motherhood, but to speak up about the challenges facing mothers and the supports we must offer.

More than ever before, women entering motherhood are faced with unique challenges. While some mothers struggle to balance the demands of a

full-time job with motherhood, other mothers face barriers finding stable employment. For single mothers, these challenges are even more pronounced. That's why investing in services like public child care and maternal health, and raising the minimum wage to a living wage is so important. So far, this government has failed to address the growing need for accessible and affordable childcare in this province. And, instead of investing in maternal health services, they've chosen a path of deep cuts.

On behalf of our NDP caucus, I would like to thank all mothers for your love, sacrifice and hard work, and for being incredible models of love, compassion and kindness for the next generation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to speak to the statement? *[Agreed]*

**Ms. Lamoureux:** Today we rise to celebrate our moms.

As times continue to change, so does the definition of a mother. With that said, I want to thank all women who give birth, all trusted guardians who help raise, have the talks and provide a safe place to reside.

Whether this person be verbally addressed as your mother or not, Mother's Day is a day to appreciate those we thank for where we are today.

Madam Speaker, I think this is a great opportunity to thank those who foster, adopt, mentor and work with children and teenagers.

Whether biological or not, we wouldn't be here without our moms. So, thank you, moms of my fellow MLA colleagues for being here today. And although my mom, Cathy Lamoureux, couldn't be here in Winnipeg today, I wanted to give her a shout out. Now, Madam Speaker, I know that I'm not allowed to use props, so allow me to take a sip of my coffee and say, happy Mother's Day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine

proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

### **Minimum Wage Indexation Act**

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to our government's plan to improve wages for working Manitobans.

Today, I introduced the minimum wage indexation act. This legislation provides a consistent and predictable way of indexing Manitoba's minimum wage with inflation through a fully transparent formula. Several other provinces in Canada already use this method.

With the proposed legislation, Manitoba's minimum wage will increase to \$11.15 per hour on October 1st, 2017. This will ensure Manitoba remains in the middle of all Canadian provinces for its minimum wage. For next year, and in the years ahead, adjustments to the minimum wage will be announced prior to April 1st to take effect on October 1st of each year.

This bill will also ensure that in years of negative or no inflation, the minimum wage will not decrease.

Madam Speaker, improving wages for working Manitobans is important to us. We are also increasing the threshold when members start to pay tax, taking almost 3,000 Manitobans off the tax rolls.

This government continues our government's work to ensure working Manitobans are able to take home more of their hard-earned money, while providing predictability for businesses that generate growth and job creation in our economy.

In line with other Canadian provinces, this legislation represents a balanced, common sense approach that reflects our commitment to workers, their families and to small business.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and we look forward to the support of members opposite in passing this important legislation.

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Manitoba had a 17-year tradition of minimum wage increases that equitably reflected the interests of labour and business in Manitoba. After giving himself and his Cabinet a 20 per cent pay raise last year, this was the first year that the Premier (Mr. Pallister)

refused to raise the minimum wage for hard-working Manitobans. This decision hurt Manitoba families and took more than \$400 out of their pockets last year alone.

The provincial government has an obligation to do everything it can to help raise Manitobans out of poverty, and the freeze put on minimum wage increases was not the right strategy to do so. It only left minimum wage earners in Manitoba with less spending power, less disposable income, and it meant many of them had to spend more time working, more time away from their families, just to make ends meet.

With the cuts to health care, education initiatives, the services and programs minimum wage earners depend on are becoming increasingly less accessible, less affordable or simply obsolete. And to the government's legislation that would impose two-year wage freeze followed by a two-year wage cap on Manitoba public sector workers, it's clear that low-income minimum wage earners in Manitoba are not this government's priority.

Madam Speaker, we need to ensure no Manitoban is left behind, and that everyone who is working full-time is living above the poverty line. Our NDP team acted on that belief for 17 years. It's about time this Conservatives got on board. Fifteen cents will not cut it.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to speak to the statement? *[Agreed]*

**Ms. Lamoureux:** In October, Manitobans were disappointed to hear that their minimum wage would not be increasing.

This move by the provincial government disproportionately affected women, who make up 60 per cent of minimum wage earners as well as low-income families.

Currently, a Manitoban who works full time for minimum wage earns less than \$20,000 a year, which is \$10,000 less than the low-income cut-off for a family of two.

For a single mother of one child, working full time, to earn a living above the poverty line, Manitoba would need to raise its minimum wage to \$15.23 an hour.

Manitoba's more than 30,000 minimum wage earners have found themselves \$400 poorer this year due to inflation.

Madam speaker, it's good to hear that this government is willing to look at raising minimum wage to inflation, yet it's important that Manitobans are receiving livable wages.

If the government is looking to save money, they need to invest proactively to reduce future costs. Minimum wage is only a small piece of the puzzle.

Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Federal Response to Border Crossings

**Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson):** Madam Speaker, by only closely monitoring the situation at Emerson and elsewhere, the federal Liberal government's lack of desire to properly address illegal border crossings has left Canadian citizens to deal with the consequences, citizens like Abiodun "Abbey" Ogunbanwo.

\* (13:50)

Originally from Nigeria, Abbey has been in Canada for 13 years, and after legally attaining his Canadian citizenship and getting married seven years ago, Abbey filed for family class sponsorship to bring his family Taiwo—his wife Taiwo and two stepchildren, Michael and Deborah from Nigeria to Canada so they may be reunited in Thompson where he works full time and is also a church pastor.

Abbey's family's application has been in the process for over 5 years. They have complied on time with every request, supplied all information, had interviews, supplied DNA samples twice, and Abbey has spent significant resources on travel and lawyers and has continually been told to wait.

After waiting close to a year, being told to call back again in a month, again in a month, again and again and getting the runaround from his local NDP MP Niki Ashton's office, Abbey's situation became more desperate as attacks, killings and bombings against Christians by the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria increased.

Abbey contacted me a couple of months ago. He explained his situation, including how living apart from his family for over 6 years is hard on their relationship and how it's taking an emotional toll on him because his family's in danger.

With help from the member of Assiniboia, we supplied Abbey with information on how to properly submit a petition to the House of Commons in Parliament assembled. Abbey prepared the documents, obtained the proper amount of signatures and returned the completed petition. With help from the member of Emerson, I forwarded the petition to federal Conservative Party MP Ted Falk's office hoping to have the petition read in the House of Commons, and I thank them for their co-operation in looking into the status of Abbey's application and getting back to us right away.

Abbey continues to be committed to bringing his family to Canada through proper channels. He has taken time off work to drive here overnight from Thompson to attend today's sitting.

I hope everyone will join me—

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

**Mr. Bindle:** Madam Speaker, I request leave to have the text of the petition included in Hansard.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to have the text of the petition included in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

*Petition to the House of Commons in Parliament assembled*

*I, Abbeyodun (Abbey) Ogunbanwo, a citizen of Canada, resident of XXXXX, in the city of Thompson, in the province of Manitoba, Canada, at present working with the Canadian Mental Health Association as the Coordinator for the Thompson Homeless Shelter and a Church Pastor at Leaf Rapids under the umbrella of Thompson Pentecostal Assembly, draw the attention of the House of Commons in Parliament Assembled to the following:*

- 1. That I got married to my wife Taiwo Adekemi Ogunbanwo in Nigeria on October 21, 2010.*
- 2. That, at present my wife and two children still reside in Lagos, Nigeria.*
- 3. That in April 2012, I filed for a Family Class Sponsorship to bring my wife (Taiwo Adekemi Ogunbanwo) and my two children, son – Opeyemi Michael Ogunbanwo and daughter – Oyindamola Deborah Ogunbanwo to Canada.*
- 4. That the said application was received on April 12, 2012 by Immigration office in Canada and a file number XXXXX was issued to me as the applicant for sponsorship.*



5. That my wife was invited for an interview on November 22, 2012 at the Ghana High Commission and to brought along some other documents, as per the letter requested.

6. That an application number XXXXX and file number XXXXX was issued to her application.

7. That the said interview took place in Accra, Ghana November 22, 2012.

8. That a letter of refusal to the application was received on November 27, 2012, and I was given the option to appeal the decision within 30 days .

9. That an appeal was submitted on December 9, 2012 and that a hearing date for the appeal was set for March 19, 2015.

10. That after the appeal hearing with all supported evidence and documentation provided, a decision was made by the Judge and an approval letter was issued on April 13, 2015 for the Immigration to proceed, and the application be processed.

11. That on June 5, 2015, a letter requesting the children and myself to go for a DNA testing was received.

12. That the result of the DNA testing was received by Immigration on June 20, 2015.

13. That a letter was received from the Immigration office stating that the DNA test result is not sufficient enough proof for them to grant approval for the application and I was given another 30 days to provide more supporting documents to back up my claims, if I wanted to continue the process.

14. That myself and my wife submitted another set of Sworn Affidavit papers on November 25, 2015 stating all the fact all over again and sworn to in front of a judge.

15. That a letter was received from Immigration on August 16, 2016 requesting for another set of DNA testing for my children.

16. That the DNA testing was done in August 18, 2016 at the prescribed hospital and

17. That since August, 2016, we have not heard back from the Immigration and are not allowed to make phone calls to their office as per the instruction on their website.

Therefore, we petitioners call upon the House of Commons in Parliament Assembled to:

1. Please review the status of Mr. Abiodun Ogunbanwo's family immigration application, help to resolve this issue, and enable him to proceed with sponsoring his family into Canada.

2. Please help Mr. Ogunbanwo reunite with my family because they have lived apart for well over 6 years and it is beginning to affect him, his wife, their relationship, their children, and he would really appreciate the support of his family around him given the type of work he is presently doing.

3. Please help reunite Mr. Ogunbanwo's family in Canada because his wife and two step children currently live in a crisis situation with killings and bombings taking place in Nigeria, and he fears for their lives because nobody knows where the Fulani Herdsmen will strike next.

4. Please ask the Minister of Immigration to allow Mr. Abiodun Ogunbanwo to reunite with his family in Canada. The family is respectful of the immigration process and believe there's been an error in the red tape in Ghana or Canada. The undersigned vouch for Mr. Ogunbanwo's character. He is a leader in the community, he's a leader in the North, and he is clearly a man who is a great Canadian and so will his family members be, once they are allowed to enter the country.

#### **Winnipeg Police Half Marathon**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** On May 7, more than 2,400 people took part in the 13th annual Winnipeg police half marathon.

Runners and walkers enjoyed the sun and mild temperatures, if not the stiff easterly wind, as they completed a five-kilometre course, the two-person relay or the entire signature 21.1-kilometre race.

I finished the half marathon in just over one hour and 46 minutes. The Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Ms. Squires) and the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) also completed the half marathon. The member for Morris joins me and a small number of members—a small number of runners who've completed the race each and every year.

Race Director Nick Paulet and his team ensure that the event is a complete success, even as runners in past years have faced snow, ice, gale-force winds and even perplexed deer along Wellington Crescent.

I was delighted to attend the recent Manitoba Runners' Association Hall of Fame dinner where Nick was recognized as Manitoba's Race Director of the Year.

The race raises money for research for the treatment and cure of brain cancer. Brain cancer has a survival rate of just 25 per cent and is the leading cause of cancer death among children.

This race was dedicated to Jo Schiewe who lost her courageous battle with brain cancer last August. Her family was presented with the Canadian Cancer Society's highest honour, the national Medal of Courage, during a race-day ceremony.

The police half marathon is a shining example of the way that the women and men of the Winnipeg Police Service give back to our community. I commend Nick Paulet and all of the volunteers for putting on a tremendous event. I congratulate all racers who covered the course.

The 14th annual Winnipeg police half marathon will take place on the first Sunday of May, 2018. I hope to see many colleagues running not from, but with, the police.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Jestoni Villanueva**

**Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan):** I rise today to recognize Jestoni Villanueva for his outstanding achievements in high school track and field. He is accompanied here today by his family: mother, Edna; father, Tony; and sister, Angelica, otherwise known as his biggest fans.

Recently, his West Kildonan Collegiate Wolverine was named the Tire Recycle Urban High School Athlete of the Week for his performance in track and field.

Jestoni first discovered a passion for track and field, in particular the long jump, as a student at Leila North middle school. He has been training ever since, and with the encouragement of coaches and family begun to establish himself as an elite athlete.

Not to be underestimated at five foot five inches tall, Jestoni easily clears a distance of 20 feet, nearly four times his height. This feat won him the Kildonan Peguis athletic conference junior boys indoor long-jump competition record. Complementary to this achievement, Jestoni placed third in the 60-metre sprint and helped bring his relay team to second place finish at the same conference.

While an ambitious and accomplished young athlete, Jestoni exudes a sense of humility beyond his years. Wolverines coach, Mikki Grouette, says of Jestoni, we know that he'd learned a lot of his skill

from excellent track clubs in the city, but doesn't feel like he's above the rest of us. He trains with the leading athletes. It is known that Jestoni is supportive, not just of teammates, but his competitors as well.

Jestoni has taken the initiative to establish himself as a junior- and varsity-level representative for track and field sports. He continues to encourage those participating in track and field and hopes to one day to further promote the sport through coaching or running his own track and field club.

From a long jump record to winning gold and silver medals at high school indoor provincials to becoming a Boeing classic champion and leading his peers to similar achievements, Jestoni, a sophomore athlete, has accompanied much and will have much more in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**John Blatz**

**Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Madam Speaker, today, I am honoured to rise in the House and speak about John Blatz.

John was a firm believer in our democratic system and led by example, showing people that anyone who wants to be involved can get involved in the political system. Throughout his career, he was very practical and understood how our political system worked and where people could make their voices heard.

John had a very busy career in the political sphere. In the '80s, he sat on the Manitoba Lotteries board. He later sat on the Highway Traffic Board and was promoted to chairman of the Highway Traffic Board.

He was also an active volunteer for politicians that he believed in. To name a few: Bob Banman; Albert Driedger; the former—the current MLA for Steinbach; Jake Epp, former MP and federal Minister of Health; the honourable Gary Filmon and our current Premier (Mr. Pallister) in his leadership campaign.

John's commitment and dedication were not qualities that went unnoticed. The honourable Gary Filmon once said John Blatz was one of the most loyal and dedicated supporters he had in the Steinbach area. I could always count on his leadership and commitment.

Madam Speaker, the passion and dedication John had was passed down to his daughter, Jenny Plett, and, as a result, has led to me sitting in the Legislative Assembly today. Jenny, through her dad's example, saw something in me and encouraged me to run.

It is important for us to remember that is an extreme privilege to be able to express our political choices and opinions in a democratic society, especially when we see countries all over the world where this isn't a possibility. John has always been aware of this and always worked tirelessly for the causes he believed in.

John passed away July 29th, 2014.

I'd like to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing John's dedication and spirit, as well as Jenny Plett, his daughter, and Margaret Blatz, his wife.

### Aqua Doves

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Today, I would like to recognize the Flin Flon Aqua Doves, the oldest and only synchronized swimming team in all of northern Manitoba, based out of Flin Flon.

Established not long after the community swimming pool was built in 1975, the Aqua Doves have a proud history of success in the Flin Flon constituency. Their first coach, Adrienne Bage, was a national-level coach who worked tirelessly to grow and promote the sport in the community.

Thirty-five years on, the Aqua Doves continue to carry on the strong tradition of synchronized swimming in northern Manitoba. Every Saturday morning at 8 a.m. sharp, you'll find the Aqua Doves gathered on the pool deck for the practice and preparing their routines. The program welcomes swimmers of all ages and abilities to promote fitness and fun.

Recently, the Aqua Doves represented Flin Flon in the Crocus Challenge in Winnipeg with great success. Their swimmers competed in both the recreational and competitive streams, and several swimmers went on to compete in the Canadian prairie synchronized swimming championship held in Winnipeg this past weekend. It was a huge event, gathering swimmers from across the prairies, but the Aqua Doves held their own and did Flin Flon proud.

\* (14:00)

Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize all the swimmers and coaching team of the Flin Flon Aqua Doves for their dedication and their commitment to the sport, and I wish them all the best in future competitions and another 35 years of success.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Paul and Rita Teitsma from High Level, Alberta, who are the brother and sister-in-law of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), along with Dennis and Andie-Annie Teitsma, who are the parents of the honourable member for Radisson.

And I have heard that Mr. Dennis Teitsma is 85 years old today, and on behalf of all honourable members we wish him a very happy birthday and welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Government Accountability Performance Record

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The Premier says the opposite of what he means. He says he wants to improve education, then makes class sizes bigger. He says he wants improvements to health care, then closes hospital emergency rooms. He says he wants protection for front-line workers, then eliminates jobs.

The Premier speaks the opposite of what he means, so when he says he's giving governing his hundred per cent effort, we want to ask: Does he mean he's giving his efforts 97 per cent?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, we are a new government but we're a government that's demonstrated our integrity in every way. We are keeping our word to Manitobans. After a decade of debt, we're fixing the finances; after a decade of decay, repairing the services and, after a decade of decline, we're rebuilding the services for Manitobans and the economy at the same time.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** Last week the Premier wouldn't reveal how he communicates, but it is clear that the biggest issue from the Premier is that he says one thing, then does the opposite. When he pressed on his—when pressed on his contradictions he goes on the attack.

But here's a real test of his effectiveness: the Premier doesn't have a health deal with Ottawa; the Premier hasn't made a commitment to the plan to reduce climate change; the Premier doesn't have a plan to reduce poverty.

The Premier says he works very hard, but with so little delivered, we have to ask him: Does he agree maybe things would be better if he started working at governing?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, Madam Speaker, one thing we've done and will continue to do is to reach out to all members of the House and involve them in shared efforts. We think that teamwork works and we've seen how it doesn't work with the previous government.

So here's an opportunity for the members: They could join with us and stand up for Manitobans who want better health care. They could join with us and stand up for Manitobans who want a better Canada Pension Plan. They could stand with us and stand up for Manitoba's aerospace industry. They failed to do it on all three of those things so far, Madam Speaker. Here's their opportunity to join with a good government in standing up for Manitobans.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** The government doesn't just have a communications problem. There is simply no way to gloss over the decisions of the Premier. He says he will release reports; then he doesn't. He says he will protect workers; then he doesn't. He says he will improve services, then cuts them.

Madam Speaker, why should Manitobans believe what the Premier is saying?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, Madam Speaker, the previous administration had a chance. They took taxpayers' money—\$300,000; they hired an international expert, Phillip Dunsky. He said, let's have a plan and implement a plan so Manitobans could pay less for hydro. And what did the previous government do, Madam Speaker? Well, they hid the report.

And then they asked for advice from Dr. David Peachey on improving wait times and reducing those

wait times for Manitobans—paid \$700,000 for that. And they had a chance to act on the recommendations, but what did they do, Madam Speaker? They buried the report.

Madam Speaker, they didn't implement these recommendations from international experts paid for by Manitoba taxpayers because they didn't have the courage to act. We do.

#### **Premier's Communication Methods Use of Private or Government Email**

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** Madam Speaker, late last week we learned that Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall admitted to using private email for government business. At first, Premier Wall doubled down and said he would continue to use private email for government business. But within 24 hours, though, Premier Wall changed course and he confirmed that he will use only government email for government business.

Will this Premier follow Premier Wall's lead, admit that he was wrong and confirm that he, too, will use only government email for government business?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I'll continue, Madam Speaker, and this government will continue, to be very concerned and act on the advice of experts, whether it's the ethics commissioner or—in the case of disclosing personal assets, or if it's the advice of the Ombudsman, as we have requested and the opposition agrees, so that we can find the best possible way to protect the integrity and confidentiality of all information.

But the member speaks about correcting the record. He said last week—and the media picked up on this—that I have a company that I declared for the very first time. He said that, and the media picked it all up, and, well, they took him at his word. But, Madam Speaker, that company, he asked me about a year ago.

Now, how could it be that he would ask me about a new company a year ago? Madam Speaker, you see, the member has put false information on the record through the media, embarrassed the media in doing it, and I would think he should apologize to the media for making them make mistakes.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan), on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Swan:** I'll encourage the media to walk across to the Clerk's office and check the Premier's 2015 Conflict of Interest declaration. That should clear that up.

Even before Premier Wall reversed his course on the use of private email, his office had confirmed that, in any case, all of Premier Wall's private emails were subject to freedom of information laws. These laws apply both to disclosure but also the protection of sensitive and confidential information.

This Premier has refused our freedom of information request, and it's been necessary for our caucus to apply to the Ombudsman's office.

Will this Premier, who wants Manitobans to believe he's open and transparent, admit this was wrong, notify the Ombudsman the information will be provided, and answer our freedom of information request?

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, the member for Minto mendaciously digs the hole deeper. And I know that he made up information about his own leader, so I expect that I shouldn't probably worry about him making up information about me.

But, Madam Speaker, here's a quote from last year's Estimates: Why did the Premier disclose his shares in Pallister Investments 22 in November 20th, 2013?

That's his question, so when the member makes things up he should get a little more clever, or maybe better idea, Madam Speaker, don't make things up and embarrass yourself in front of your colleagues, the people of this Chamber and the people of Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** I would just indicate that the word mendacious is a word that has not been acceptable, as it is considered to be an unparliamentary word. So I just would urge caution in the use of such language in the House.

**Mr. Swan:** I thought maybe the Premier would rise to apologize, but that doesn't seem to be one of his abilities.

It's very surprising that the Premier is so unwilling—

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Swan:** —to provide a clear answer to this question.

Maybe he doesn't use email, as he told the media a few months ago, or maybe he uses a number of private email accounts, as he told me in Estimates just a week ago.

Privacy commissioners in British Columbia and Nova Scotia have recently spoken about the requirement for government business to be conducted by government email. Premier Wall in Saskatchewan has acknowledged that he was wrong and will change his practice.

Will this Premier admit that he was wrong and confirm that he, too, will use only government communication devices and government email for government business? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Pallister:** Just because Gord Mackintosh writes a book about a rebellion within the NDP doesn't mean it just happened, Madam Speaker. And just because the member says that I just registered a company he knows that was registered four and a half years ago, doesn't mean it was registered recently.

Madam Speaker, the member for Minto chooses—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** The member for Minto chooses to put false information on the record, discredits himself in the process, embarrasses the media who repeat his misleading statements and does us no favours here in terms of his conduct. He's becoming the whopper king of this place, Madam Speaker.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

### **Minimum Wage Poverty Reduction**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** The Premier took a 20 per cent pay increase last year and froze minimum wage, depriving working Manitobans of roughly \$400. The Premier said raising the minimum wage, according to him, does not reduce poverty.

Madam Speaker, the previous government's total increases to minimum wage were more than double the rate of inflation.

Will the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade commit to matching or exceeding that?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** We know the previous NDP government certainly took their direction from union bosses. We've taken another approach to that. We've actually gone out and consulted with Manitobans in terms of the minimum wage.

And as a result of the discussion with Manitobans—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cullen:** —and across Manitoba, we're putting forward what we think is a consistent and predictable method in dealing with minimum wage going forward. And we believe this will be positive for Manitobans and certainly positive for Manitoba's business community.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** Full-time workers in this province should not have to live in poverty, and that's why the minimum wage needs a significant increase. But this government froze minimum wage increases while giving themselves a raise.

This government is delaying when it could act.

Will the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade commit to a plan that moves low-income workers toward a living wage?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, Madam Speaker, you know, I thought maybe the member opposite was going to buy into this. I think there's been a lot of people that asked for the indexing. Clearly, this provides certainty for Manitoba workers, and I think this is a positive thing.

I know—I recognize there's about 5 per cent of employees in Manitoba are in minimum wage. We're certainly looking forward to getting more Manitobans back to work.

In fact, Madam Speaker, as part of creating a positive relationship, positive partnerships, creating a positive foundation for growth, our government, in conjunction with Manitobans, has created over 6,000 jobs since January 1st.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** We know this government failed to include a comprehensive plan to fight poverty in

their budget. We also know that raising the minimum wage is one of the best ways to fight poverty by directly increasing the incomes of those who need it the most. But it's still only a stepping stone.

Will this government finally show some real ambition and commit to working towards a minimum wage that can truly be called a living wage?

**Mr. Cullen:** I think Manitobans will agree with our balanced approach to minimum wage and how we're going to deal with it going forward.

Clearly, if and when the opposition get back into government, they can take whatever opportunity they want to take in terms of moving forward on that.

We're committed to getting Manitobans back to work. And we're committed to positive partners—partnerships to do that. And we also believe in education. We put more money into education than ever before to get more Manitobans up and above the minimum—poverty wage, Madam Speaker.

This is what we're going to do. We're going to create more jobs for Manitobans and get more Manitobans back to work.

### **Premier's Holding Company Conflict of Interest Concerns**

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** The Premier of Manitoba has made it abundantly clear that he has no respect for the Province's conflict of interest laws. He knows the public trust in this institution, the Legislature, in the office that he holds, is essential and that he needs to respond honestly and forthrightly about real or perceived conflicts of interest.

When asked last week about a holding company, he said, quite—and I quote—frankly, it's none of your business. Unquote.

I want to give the Premier the opportunity today to retract that statement and apologize to the people of Manitoba.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I really encourage the member to listen to the questions from his own colleagues when they're asked, Madam Speaker, and I also encourage him to listen to the answers when they're given. I've already answered that question. And I have previously said, and I'll say again, that the member opposite knew that I had declared fully

all my assets in 2013 in respect of the question he asked.

Madam Speaker, I've gone over and above the recommendations of the conflict of interest commissioner. I have exceeded those requirements and the advice he's given me. I've disclosed more assets than he advised me I needed to disclose. I have done my very best to make sure that these assets are declared.

And I'll continue to go above and beyond the requirements while we look at ways to make sure that we amend this legislation to make it work better than it ever did under the previous administration.

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

**Mr. Allum:** Again, the Premier is making it abundantly clear that he has no respect for the people of Manitoba.

Conflict of interest laws sustain political confidence in the institutions of government and in the highest office that he holds.

When he—this holding company suddenly—suddenly—out of nowhere, appeared on his conflict of interest laws he said—

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Allum:** —he said, Madam Speaker, that, frankly—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Allum:** —it was none of our business.

So will he do us all a favour today: Will he tell us, what does Pallister holding company No. 22 actually do?

**Mr. Pallister:** I recognize the member may have put a good deal of time into the preparation of the questions he now reads, Madam Speaker, but the fact is, this has been answered.

If he would choose, as members of the public can, to review the Estimates debates from last year, he'd see a detailed explanation on this very question by me.

He'd also hear this quote, if he was to choose to read it, from the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), which—who asked me this question, and a fair question, a year ago, Madam Speaker: Why did the

Premier disclose his shares in Pallister Investments in—on November 20th, 2013? And if he was to read that quote from his colleague and speak to his colleague about it, what he would find out is that there's nothing new here, that this has all been previously declared and, quite frankly, that it goes above and beyond what the conflict of interest commissioner advised that I needed to disclose.

I am perfectly willing to let the member read Hansard or review all the filed documents that I have filed, just as I could, if I had the slightest interest, review his, as well.

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

**Mr. Allum:** Well, Madam Speaker, as usual the Premier doesn't answer a direct question. The question was: What does Pallister Investments 22 actually do?

The people of Manitoba need to know whether the Premier of Manitoba is in a conflict of interest when he holds the Premier's office on the one hand, and has several business interests.

So the question is for him now is: Does this holding company do business in Manitoba and what, precisely, does it do? Answer the question.

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, it's a holding company. It holds. That's what it does. It holds. It holds the retained earnings of 40 years of work. That's what it does. That's what a holding company does.

And in answer to the previous member's questions, which I answered fully, I explained to him what I'll explain to you, Madam Speaker. I take the advice and recommendations of the conflict of interest commissioner in all my disclosures. And, in fact, I listen to the advice and then I go beyond it and disclose more items than I am required. This is one of the items which I am not required to disclose.

The members ask for openness. I give them openness and they try to score cheap political points with it and misrepresent the facts.

\* (14:20)

That's what they do, Madam Speaker. That's not what I do. That's not what we do.

### **Efficiency Manitoba Act Request to Withdraw**

**Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park):** Last Thursday, May the 11th, there was a standing committee session on Legislative Affairs, and it started around 6:00 and ended around 12:00. I have a lot of respect for the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) for saying that Bill 19, which is The Efficiency Manitoba Act, should go back to the drawing board.

Why can't the Minister for Crown Services listen to his own caucus and withdraw Bill 19?

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services):** And what we have discovered is, under NDP mismanagement we now have a bipole-Keeyask levy. It's an NDP levy of disrespect that generations are going to pay for. Bill 19 and Bill 20 will protect Manitoba ratepayers today and going into the future.

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

**Mr. Marcelino:** We think Bill 19, which is The Efficiency Manitoba Act, is a bad idea, and it turns out the member for Assiniboia thinks so too. He filibustered it on Thursday, May the 11th, from 6:00 'til 12:00 on clause 1.

Can the Minister for Crown Services address the concerns—not mine—but of the member for Assiniboia regarding this bill?

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, Madam Speaker, some time ago, the previous government—in fact, it was September of 2014—retained a highly regarded individual by the name of Phillip Dunsky to the tune of \$300,000. They got a report. They did not have the courage to follow the report, which is something that we are going to do. In fact, they never even had the courage to present it to Manitobans, to release it, something else we have the courage to do. We have the courage on both Bill 19 and Bill 20 to protect Manitoba ratepayers today and in the future.

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

**Mr. Marcelino:** I think I'm not getting through the Minister for Crown Services. I'll try the Premier.

Will the Premier instruct the Minister for Crown Services to withdraw Bill 19?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, this must be a new position of the NDP, Madam Speaker, because the previous position was that there be an arm's-length agency from Manitoba Hydro to help

Manitobans to use less hydro and pay less for hydro. That was their previous position.

They then commissioned Phillip Dunsky to give them advice, paid \$300,000 for the advice and then covered up the report and did not act on it.

Their new position is that the report is wrong, but our position is that the international expert, Phillip Dunsky, offered good advice which the taxpayers of Manitoba paid for, and so we will trust in the expert advice which the NDP refuses to listen to, Madam Speaker.

### **Response to Community Tragedies Establishment of Crisis Protocol**

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** When a tragedy strikes in an area, the whole community suffers. In our area we come together. Literally, we stop our world to help those family members who are most affected by the tragedy. We come together in grief and comfort one another by our presence.

Madam Speaker, such a tragedy struck the community of Little Grand Rapids this past weekend. A young mother was taken from us far too soon. The community is in a state of shock, a state of sadness. They need our support. I would like to be able to tell this community members that support is coming from our provincial government.

Will the minister tell me what mental health or crisis supports are being dispatched?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** I very much appreciate the member asking this question and, certainly, on behalf of all members of this colleague we—of this Legislature, we extend our condolences to the families who are impacted, to all the residents of the community. Madam Speaker, it was a tragedy that all of us learned about on the weekend.

Certainly, in discussions with my department, if there are resources that can be deployed that are needed within the community, we stand by willing to offer assistance, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms. Klassen:** Just six months ago, there was another terrible incident in which a school bus carrying 25 children tipped over in one of my riding's reserves. I heard from the Minister of Education within the first couple of hours. I was able to contact my chiefs to try and ascertain which community.



I also received updates from the minister's office, for which I was very grateful. And I let my chiefs know.

We must work together, especially in the face of tragedy.

Will the minister responsible tell me if the government is establishing formal protocols when it comes to responding to tragedies in any community?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Of course, there are a number of different ways that the government can help communities when there is a disaster, whether that is a natural disaster or something that comes as a result of human intervention or something, in this particular circumstance, it comes in another way.

Madam Speaker, there are multiple parts of government that are certainly willing to reach out when it comes to mental health, which is a part of my department. Certainly, we have resources that can be mobilized and can be utilized to help those who need it in the community to recover from an issue that obviously is very devastating for all those in the community.

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

**Ms. Klassen:** As a mother, I can't imagine what that mother is going through, but I do know that I can show up and demonstrate love and compassion. It was Mother's Day yesterday.

We need to work together so that every Manitoban feels cared for in the wake of a tragedy.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) ensure that when a tragedy strikes in a community, that the MLA who represents that area is included in planning and that he or she receives updates so that they may provide assurance that help is on the way?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, I think when tragedy occurs in Manitoba, it's been my experience in Manitoba and my experience in this Legislature, that it is more than just the MLA who comes together. I've seen instances many times when all MLAs, regardless of political affiliation, regardless of which area they represent, they have come together to offer support in any way that they possibly can.

And I can assure the member, I would be happy to ensure that there's an opportunity for me to meet with her this afternoon, and with the appropriate officials, to discuss the situation and to help in the best way we can, Madam Speaker.

### **Minimum Wage Legislation Indexed to Rate of Inflation**

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** With the fast-changing business competitive landscape and a market that's constantly moving, Manitoba business owners value predictability. That's why it's important for our government to create an environment that promotes stability and predictability.

That's why I was so pleased that the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade just a few moments ago introduced legislation to adjust minimum wage increases to inflation.

Can the minister please explain how this change to minimum wages help provide predictability to businesses?

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

Clearly, after consulting with Manitobans, we believe we have legislation and a formula that provides consistent and predictable indexing of minimum wage going forward based on Manitoba's consumer price index.

We also recognize that many other provinces are doing it, including Saskatchewan and British Columbia. This legislation will take effect, if agreed to by the opposition, October 1st of this year, increasing to \$11.15 per hour. We believe this allows employees the security of purchasing power in their salary.

\* (14:30)

We think it's the right thing to do. Many Manitobans also believe it's the right thing to do. We hope members opposite think it's the right thing to do as well.

### **Hog Industry Expansion Lake Winnipeg Phosphorus Levels**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Recently, a very thoughtful and reasonable article appeared—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** —in the newspapers addressing a very serious issue. The article came from Alexis Kanu from the Lake Winnipeg Foundation, who has significant concerns about the way the government's moving forward with deregulating important water protections in Manitoba. What she writes is, the

government of Manitoba must provide its citizens with robust evidence to demonstrate that increased manure application to agricultural fields will not result—will not increase phosphorus loading to Lake Winnipeg.

Could someone from the government please provide the evidence supporting their position?

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

Ensuring that, you know, we have safe drinking water in the province of Manitoba is extremely important to this side of the Legislature over here. We are not reducing the number of testing that we do to ensure that we have water quality in the province of Manitoba. We will continue to ensure we have amongst the highest water-quality testing in Manitoba.

And I would just like to address the statement that the member made in his private member's statement last week when he talked about removing the prohibition on manure spreading in winter. That is absolutely not true, Madam Speaker. The member opposite knows that he was wrong in that assertion, and he should really apologize to the Legislature today.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, Madam Speaker, the minister's accusation is inaccurate again. It is in her very own bill where it says they are removing that provision from legislation. They have claimed they are going to keep it under regulation, but Cabinet can remove that regulation at any point in time any Wednesday morning when they meet.

I think Manitobans like Alexis Kanu, like the Lake Winnipeg Foundation, like anyone in Manitoba who depends on clean water either for their livestock operation, for their personal enjoyment or for drinking deserves a straightforward answer from this minister.

Where is the evidence that expanding the hog industry and weakening water protection laws is not going to result in more pollution in our waterways?

**Mrs. Cox:** We are not going to take the disrespectful, ideological plan that the members opposite were taking.

We are taking a climate—I mean a science-based approach, Madam Speaker, one that was mentioned here by the University of Manitoba Expert Panel Review of Measures to Protect Lake Winnipeg, that was actually commissioned by former government and they chose to just throw underneath the table and just totally disregard. They know, in fact, that the information provided in this review and commissioned by this group at the University of Manitoba indicates that it is a science-based approach that we should take, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Madam Speaker, I had hoped in this day and age that protecting water would not be an ideological issue.

And I will applaud—despite her, you know, attacks on me today—I will applaud the minister for at least mentioning—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** —for mentioning the word science. I was very proud to attend the March for Science rally that happened a few weeks ago; she wasn't there.

But I'll read another section from the very good letter from Alexis Kanu. She says, after all, without evidence we can't be assured that appropriate measures are in place to enable the hog industry to expand without also increasing the amount of phosphorus loading to Lake Winnipeg. She's not saying don't expand the industry; she's saying show us the evidence you can do that safely without destroying Lake Winnipeg.

Will the minister please answer the question?

**Mrs. Cox:** Again, thank you so much for the question.

We will continue to ensure that we have manure management plans, Madam Speaker. And I think the member opposite knows the importance of having a plan, or at least he should know how important it is to have a plan.

We will continue to ensure that we have soil testing and construction permits and that we still have amongst the highest testing and manure management plans throughout the country, Madam Speaker, so the member opposite is wrong.

We also met with the Hog Watch on Friday afternoon. We had a very good discussion with them and we are going to work together.

This is a Province that believes in listening to Manitobans, and the members opposite should get on board.

#### **Northern Health Authority Operating Budget Inquiry**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** The northern regional health authority serves over 74,000 northern Manitobans. The minister has made deep cuts to the RHA, including making it less affordable for people to accompany patients travelling to Winnipeg, cancelling major capital projects in The Pas and Thompson and cutting non-insured services. These cuts mean families in the North, especially those with mental illness, physical disability, will lose the quality of care they depend on.

Will the minister explain what his \$6 million in cuts to the NHRA will mean for seniors and persons with disabilities who rely on services like home care?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, the member's incorrect. In fact, the northern regional health authority will get a higher budget this year than they had last year.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** The northern regional health authority has announced that they were ordered to cut \$6 million from their operating budget. There's been several memos that have been publicly released that talked about cutting \$6 million from their operating budget.

Is this minister telling us today that that \$6-million cut is not happening and that he is, in fact, increasing the budget for the Northern Health Region?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, Madam Speaker, I've indicated that the northern regional health authority, in addition to all health authorities, will see a slight increase in their budget this year.

The only decrease that I've heard more recently is from the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), who asked that we cut the Dauphin ER last week.

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

**Mr. Lindsey:** I'm more than happy to hear that the operating budget for the Northern Health Region is going to be increased, and I'm more than happy to be able to report that to my constituents, that all the stories they've heard about \$6 million in savings from the NHRA are not going to come to pass, and that includes things like potential cuts to Northern Patient Transfer.

So, the minister can clear up a lot of confusion today by clarifying that, in fact, the Northern Patient Transfer will continue as it has, making sure that people who are patients, as well as their escorts, will continue to be—

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

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, Madam Speaker, as I told the member last week, there's been no change to the Northern Patient Transfer policy for the last 22 years.

#### **Road and Bridge Projects New Infrastructure Spending**

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Madam Speaker, the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations, along with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, recently announced applications for the municipal road and bridge projects are now being accepted through our new online, single-window intake process.

Roads, bridges and other transportation infrastructure can deliver long-term economic benefits and 'support' the sustainable growth of our Manitoba communities.

Can the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations please update the House on this new approach to infrastructure funding will benefit municipalities?

\* (14:40)

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

Our government's commitment to invest in strategic infrastructure is continuing, and that includes major investments that will benefit rural communities.

In addition to the \$747 million that Manitoba Infrastructure has budgeted for roads, highways, bridges and flood protection outside of Winnipeg, the Province is making an additional \$14 million available directly to municipalities for local road and bridge projects. Applications are being accepted

online through our government's new, streamlined, single-window intake.

Madam Speaker, our government made commitments to ensure that our infrastructure spending is strategic, delivers value for Manitoba taxpayers and helps contribute to a growing economy. And, with these investments—

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

### Sturgeon Fish Numbers Population Protection

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, lake sturgeon are rather amazing fish, and they seem to enjoy what's called tail-walking; that is, standing on their tails above the water and walking backwards.

Now, they were drastically overfished in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and it's taken them more than a hundred years to start recovering in parts of Manitoba. But we want to make sure that there's no regression of this recovery.

I ask the minister: What is she doing to make sure that we're looking after our sturgeon and that they will continue to recover?

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development):** I would really like to thank the member opposite for that question.

We have actually put more money into our fish and wildlife side of our department to ensure that we do have a sustainable big-game population and a good fish population as well. So we are doing that. It's very important to us on this side of the House.

And we know that angling is a big source of revenue, and we want to make sure that we protect all of the fish, not only the sturgeon that the member opposite talks about. So, we are working on this and we want to—we're on the road to recovery, Madam Speaker, unlike the members opposite when they were in government.

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

## PETITIONS

### Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background of the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

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

(7) The introduction of this bill jeopardizes safety, taxi service, and also puts consumers at risk, as well as the livelihood of hundreds of Manitobans—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Maloway:** —many of whom have invested their life savings into the industry.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

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

### St. Boniface QuickCare Clinic

**Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface):** Madam Speaker, I would like to present the following petition to the Legislature.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

QuickCare clinics support the health-care system by offering important front-line health-care services that help seniors and families.

The six QuickCare clinics in Winnipeg are accessible, located within communities and have extended hours so that families and seniors can access high-quality primary health care quickly and close to home.

QuickCare clinics are staffed by registered nurses and nurse practitioners who are able to diagnose and treat non-urgent-care needs as well as perform procedures and interpret diagnostic tests.

The bilingual St. Boniface QuickCare clinic actively offers an essential health-care service in French to Winnipeg's Franco-Manitoban community.

Having access to bilingual services is essential to ensuring the ongoing vitality of the Franco-Manitoban community.

The francophone community support and enhancement act and the Francophone Affairs Advisory Council outline a process for consultation on matters which impact the vitality and development of the francophone community.

The provincial government has announced, without consultation, the closing of the St. Boniface QuickCare clinic on January 27, 2017, leaving St. Boniface seniors and families without access to community health care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to both recognize the importance of bilingual health-care services in Manitoba and reverse their decision to close the St. Boniface QuickCare clinic.

Signed by many, many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

### **Taxi Industry Regulation**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

### **Kelvin High School Gymnasium and Wellness Centre**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize how important it is to provide young people with quality learning spaces to succeed in school.

(2) Sport, recreation and the spaces to engage in them are critical to the health and welfare of all students.

\* (14:50)

(3) All forms of educational infrastructure, including gymnasiums and recreation centres in general, represent an incredible value-for-money investment, whereby the return is improved physical and psychological health and wellness.

(4) Kelvin High School is one of the largest high schools in the province, with over 1,200 students.

(5) Kelvin High School spent several years raising almost \$1.2 million towards the construction of a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

(6) Some Kelvin students currently have to pay to use outside facilities to obtain their mandatory physical education credit.

(7) The provincial government, in a regressive and short-sighted move, cancelled funding for the Kelvin gym and wellness centre for political reasons, despite the extensive community support, fundraising and engagement.

(8) It is wasteful and disrespectful to the dedicated efforts of staff—or students, staff and the community in general to simply lay their goals aside without consultation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the need for excellent recreation facilities in all Manitoba schools, to reverse this regressive cut and to provide Kelvin High School with the funding necessary to complete a new gymnasium and wellness centre.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans. Thank you.

### **Taxi Industry Regulation**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) Regulations have been put in place that has made Winnipeg a leader in protecting the safety of

taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

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

(5) The provincial government has moved to bring in legislation through Bill 30 that will transfer jurisdiction to the City of Winnipeg in order to bring in so-called ride-sharing services like Uber.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I'm seeking leave to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, just for today: Agriculture in room 254, Education and Training in room 255 and Indigenous and Municipal Relations in the Chamber.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Agriculture in room 254, Education and Training in room 255 and Indigenous and Municipal Relations in the Chamber?

Is that agreed?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Micklefield:** Madam Speaker, I'm seeking leave to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Agriculture in room 254, Education and Training in room 255 and Sustainable Development right here in the Chamber.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Agriculture in room 254, Education and Training in room 255 and Sustainable Development in the Chamber?

Is that agreed?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Micklefield:** Madam Speaker, I'm seeking leave to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Sustainable Development in room 254, Education and Training in room 255 and Families here in the Chamber.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Sustainable Development in room 254, Education and Training in room 255 and Families here in the Chamber?

Is that agreed?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Micklefield:** Madam Speaker, I am seeking leave to alter the Estimates sequence as follows, for today only: Sport, Culture and Heritage in room 254, Education and Training in room 255 and Families right here in the Chamber.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to alter the Estimates sequence as follows for today only: Sport, Culture and Heritage in room 254, Education and Training in room 255 and Families in the Chamber? Is that agreed?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Micklefield:** Madam Speaker, I am seeking leave for today only for the Committee of Supply to

meet in one section in room 255 to consider the Department of Education and Training while the House considers Bill 33 for second reading today in the Chamber. *[interjection]*

That would be two leave requests.

Okay, let me start again, Madam Speaker, for clarity, if I may.

I am seeking leave for today only for the Committee of Supply to meet in one section in room 255 to consider the Department of Education and Training while the House considers legislation.

Madam Speaker, I am seeking leave to proceed today to second reading of Bill 33, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act.

**Madam Speaker:** First of all, is there leave of the House for today only for the Committee of Supply to meet in one section in room 255 to consider the Department of Education and Training while the House considers legislation?

And then is there leave of the House to proceed today to second—*[interjection]*—oh.

I will revert back to, then, just the first one: Is there leave of the House for today only for the Committee of Supply to meet in one section, room 255, to consider the Department of Education and Training while the House considers legislation? *[Agreed]*

Is there leave of the House to proceed today to second reading of Bill 33, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act? *[Agreed]*

### House Business

**Mr. Micklefield:** Madam Speaker, a moment, if I may, to shuffle through the papers and reach my committee announcement scripts for this afternoon.

On House business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Private Bills will meet on Thursday, May 18th, 2017, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 215, The Civil Service Amendment Act (Employment Preference for Reservists with Active Service).

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Private Bills will meet on Thursday, May 18th, 2017, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 215, The Civil Service Amendment Act (Employment Preference for Reservists with Active Service).

**Mr. Micklefield:** On House business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Thursday, May 18th, 2017, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 9, The Advocate for Children and Youth Act; and Bill 11, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Staff Qualifications and Training).

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Thursday, May 18, 2017, at 6 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 9, The Advocate for Children and Youth Act; Bill 11, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Staff Qualifications and Training).

**Mr. Micklefield:** So, in accordance with what has been previously agreed, the Committee of Supply can proceed in room 255, and we will consider Bill 33 here in the Chamber.

**Madam Speaker:** As agreed upon, the section of Supply will continue now in room 255.

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 33—The Minimum Wage Indexation Act (Employment Standards Code Amended)

**Madam Speaker:** And in the Chamber we will move to second reading of Bill 33, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act.

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 33, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act (Employment Standards Code Amended), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the opportunity to debate Bill 33 today.

Certainly, this is a relatively a unique concept, and just introducing a bill today and then having the opportunity to debate the bill today, I sense maybe there is some urgency on the opposition benches to move this bill through. And certainly would like to see that come to fruition, and we can move on to committee and get some more input from Manitobans on Bill 33.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, our government is moving in a new direction in terms of how we're approaching minimum wage. I know in the past

under the previous NDP government they certainly took direction from union bosses and made changes to the minimum wage in that regard.

Madam Speaker, we have taken the opportunity over the last several months to consult with Manitobans. And, obviously, we are also using the Labour Management Review Committee as a mechanism for that consultation. That, of course, is only one component of consultations with Manitobans.

We also undertook a very comprehensive discussion with Manitobans during our prebudget consultations. I know we certainly had some feedback in terms of where Manitobans wanted us to go in terms of minimum wage. And, clearly, part of that discussion and ongoing discussion with Manitobans is that we want to get as many Manitobans back to work as we can.

*Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

And, clearly, we believe, as a government, in positive partnerships. And we firmly believe those positive partnerships will lead to prosperity for Manitobans. They—that will lead to prosperity for individual Manitobans, and it will lead to prosperity for the business communities in Manitoba and, ultimately, it will lead to prosperity for us as a government. And I think many Manitobans recognize that for us as a province to get ourselves out of the financial situation that we're in, we want to make sure we have as many Manitobans in the workforce as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen some very positive numbers come out of the business community. We've noted that small business in Manitoba is the most optimistic anywhere in Canada. And, quite frankly, we want to harness that optimism and put Manitobans back to work.

And the numbers are reflective of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have seen, since January 1st of this year, 6,000 jobs increased—number of people working has increased by 6,000 since January 1st of this year. And we obviously believe that is a step in the right direction.

Clearly, there is more work ahead. But Manitobans have told us consistently that our role as a government is to make sure that we create the foundation for economic growth here in Manitoba. And we certainly are taking steps to do that.

Clearly, we've outlined the red tape reduction strategy, and we're going to be moving that forward



as we progress, and that's going to be a work-in-progress across every department within government and across a broad range of government, and obviously all the sectors in Manitoba, as well.

So we certainly look forward to that undertaking. We've had some very positive discussions with Manitobans about that red tape and how that is going to open up opportunities for Manitobans to get back to work. And that's really what it's about at the end of the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we're excited about that.

In fact, what we've seen so far is that Manitoba now has the lowest unemployment rate of any province in Manitoba. We believe that's part of creating the right framework for economic growth here in Manitoba.

Clearly, this legislation in Bill 33 brings in the concept of indexing. And indexing, we believe, will provide certainty. It will provide certainty for Manitoba business and it will also provide certainty for Manitoba employees.

Clearly, by tying the indexing of minimum wage to Manitoba's consumer price index, we will be guaranteeing employees that they would not be losing buying power as a result of inflation. I think this is a key component of indexing minimum wage.

Clearly, when we look around the country, a number of other jurisdictions are using indexing, and I point out to you Saskatchewan and the province of British Columbia are using a similar model to what we use. Saskatchewan are looking at a slightly different index model where they're tying in the consumer price index as well as minimum—I'm sorry—as a wage group, as well, so it's a little more of a complicated and a little more nuanced formula. We're using a straight consumer price index relative to Manitoba.

So the minimum wage will be indexed from the standing point of \$11 an hour from last year. It will be indexed, changing on October 1st of this year, and it will go up 15 cents based on the formula from that consumer price index.

Just for the sake of clarity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the formula will be applied to the \$11 base, and then there will be a roundup to the nearest five cents; that's how the formula ended up at \$11.15. Going forward, the index will be based on the actual figure, whatever that figure turns out to be, without the rounding up to the next 5-cent increment.

There's also provisions in this particular legislation that will protect minimum wage in the event that there's deflation, so the provisions of the legislation will maintain the minimum wage at the existing level even if there is a period of deflation in a given year. So that, clearly, protects workers and also sets predictability for the business community as well.

The other part of the certainty around here and the predictability around having an established formula for minimum wage is that people will know in advance of the October 1st each year what that particular wage rate will be because the consumer price index will be calculated early in the new year. We will, as a government, be able to indicate to Manitobans what that particular index will result in prior to April 1st of each year, so that certainly 'glives' the predictability to the business community and also to workers around Manitoba and certainly to their families.

The other thing I think we have to make sure that Manitobans realize that, as a government, we want to make sure that Manitobans keep as much money in their pockets as possible, especially low-income earners, and to do this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are increasing the threshold where Manitobans begin to pay tax. We know we're a long way behind the Canadian average in terms of that threshold, and we're a really long way behind our neighbours in Saskatchewan in terms of that index and where we start paying income tax.

So our government is moving to increase that threshold where Manitobans pay income tax and, certainly, this year alone, there'll be close to 3,000 Manitobans taken off the tax roll directly. That, clearly, will have implications for low-income Manitobans and, clearly, it is a step in the right direction.

Do we have more work to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Indeed, indeed we do, but we're prepared to carry that out, even in the face of tough financial times, a tough financial deficit position. We certainly want to make sure Manitobans keep as much money at their kitchen table as possible.

So these are some of the provisions that we have included in the legislation, and we're excited about that. We are certainly excited about having the discussion going forward on this. Hopefully, the opposition members will agree that we should get this particular legislation to committee. We will get some more input from Manitobans.

\* (15:10)

And I do appreciate, and I want to thank the Labour Management Review Committee for their work on this. I realize that they did not reach a consensus, but that comes with the territory, but we do appreciate their work on this endeavour as well. Certainly, both groups did look at the indexing formula. I think there was, you know, some consensus that an indexing formula could work here in Manitoba, and we concur with that—those comments as well.

So I don't want to take up too much more time. We think this is a step forward for Manitoba. We're excited about having a discussion—further discussions with Manitobans about this particular legislation. This—just to indicate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should put us sort of mid-range with other provinces as well in terms of where we're at in terms of the minimum wage.

So we're optimistic the opposition members will pass this legislation and we can move on and have a further discussion with Manitobans.

Thank you very much.

### Questions

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

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** Could the minister tell us today outside the Manitoba Labour Board who else he consulted on this bill?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade):** I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. Just for clarification, it was the Labour Management Review Committee that we tasked to have a discussion about this particular legislation. Certainly, the department will supply that particular committee with information relative to history in Manitoba and also history and—relative to other jurisdictions in Manitoba so that they can take that information and put information—make recommendations back to government.

So it was the Labour Management Review Committee that did the review and, as well, I talked about the budgetary process we went through over

the last number of months prior to bringing in the budget and, certainly, there was—I think close to 20,000 submissions from Manitobans—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member's time—minister's time is up.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake):** Can you explain the benefits of knowing what the index is going to be on April 1st and then not adjusting it 'til October, or does that benefit both employees and businesses?

**Mr. Cullen:** I do appreciate that question. We believe this particular legislation as it's laid out will provide that certainty and that clarity that Manitobans are looking for, certainly the Manitoba businesses are looking for. By having the consumer price index calculated prior to the April 1st when we can make the calculations to the minimum wage, and, of course, the minimum wage will be effective October 1st, but we can signal to Manitobans by April 1st via legislation what that particular new rate in terms of minimum wage will be effective October 1st.

So it really speaks to the clarity and it speaks to the certainty around what the minimum wage will be going forward.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Honourable minister's time is up.

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** This bill would provide for an increase in the minimum wage based on the consumer price index if Cabinet decided to allow that to happen, yet this government has a bill before the House that would increase tuition by the consumer price index plus 5 per cent per year.

Why is this minister promoting a bill which will make it harder and harder for students and leave them falling farther and farther behind to work to earn money for tuition?

**Mr. Cullen:** I do appreciate the question from the member. Clearly, we believe that education certainly is a way out of poverty for many Manitobans. Clearly, we're—we've committed to funding education. We've also committed to making sure that low-income Manitobans especially have the opportunity for advanced education, and we think that's very critical.

So we're certainly—actually allowing more money, putting more money in more Manitobans' hands to make sure they have the ability to go to post-secondary education, and we think that's very important for Manitoba. We think that's very important to put Manitobans back to work, and we

think that's really important for Manitoba's economy and it's really important for Manitoba's government.

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services):** I have two quick questions.

I just want to ask the minister: This would be on top of the adjustment—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay, sorry.

Sorry. Honour—order.

Just want to remind everybody it's not like your typical question period when it comes to introduce—have a bill. Because it's a minister's bill, it all has to be done by the opposition, and we just—government bills are questioned by the opposition. Sorry.

**Mr. Allum:** No one knows why the Minister of Crown Services just got up there, but I suppose there's some explanation.

Could the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade tell us why it's taken him so long to raise the minimum wage for so little?

**Mr. Cullen:** I know, previously in the previous NDP government, they didn't really like to consult with Manitobans. Clearly they took their direction from union bosses. I guess that process wouldn't take long.

We took a different approach. We decided that we were going to consult with Manitobans, clearly, through the prebudgetary process; we posted 20,000 submissions to that. We're excited about engaging with Manitobans. We engaged the Labour Management Review Committee. They obviously took some time to review what other jurisdictions were doing in terms of minimum wage, and looking at different indexing and certainly different indexing methodology as well. So these things are not taken lightly. I know previous governments took some things lightly.

We also have the view in terms of trying to put Manitobans back to work. And there's a lot of things that come into play in that regard. And the other, I think, important piece of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is keeping more money in Manitobans'—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Honourable minister's time is up.

**Mr. Swan:** Now, we know that in the year 2016, there was no increase in the minimum wage in Manitoba. So why wouldn't the bill the minister's brought forward actually include, effectively, a

double increase for 2017 to reflect a difference in the consumer price index over the last two years?

**Mr. Cullen:** I appreciate the member's comments.

We think this process will provide certainty that Manitobans are looking for. Certainly, the certainty from the business perspective, the certainty from the employers—employees' perspective, as well.

And this—even with this change in the index and the formula, with \$11 as the base figure, we're still going to be middle of the road in terms of minimum wage relative to other jurisdictions. So we think this will achieve some positive outcomes. It also obviously protects the—any inflation rises and increase—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister's time is up.

**Mr. Allum:** My friend's question from Minto was a good one, and I think the minister owes Manitobans, especially those earning minimum wage, an explanation. Why is it not retroactive back a year when he refused to raise the minimum wage last year?

**Mr. Cullen:** I think we could ask Manitobans why the previous government failed to raise the threshold where they started to pay income tax. That was something that was never addressed under the NDP government. I know—I would assume the NDP—and this isn't just my take on it—but they always loved a tax, and they never really addressed the fundamental issues about poverty. We came into government, we had the highest poverty rates of anywhere in the country. There is work to do. Minimum wage is just one tool in the toolbox to address that. By allowing the—Manitobans to keep more in their pockets, putting more Manitobans back to work and providing proper education to enhance outcomes—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Honourable minister's time is up.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** The minister has said that his approach is a middling approach, a middle of the road or something like that. I understand that the government's theme was to aim higher. What happened to the government's theme? Is the minister retreating from what the goal was earlier on?

\* (15:20)

**An Honourable Member:** It says higher.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I appreciate the member's question, and I would say this government is aiming higher.

Manitobans have created 6,000 jobs since January 1st of this year. Manitoba now has the lowest unemployment rate of any jurisdiction in Canada. We believe we're on the right track. We have to create the right foundation for economic growth to put more Manitobans back to work. It's a step in the right direction.

We've got a positive optimism in the business community. There's more time—more opportunity for Manitobans to get to work than ever before, and we're committed to doing that.

**Mr. Swan:** I want to go back to the question my friend from Fort Garry-Riverview asked.

The minister talks with different tools, but not all tools are created equal. The indexing of the brackets actually only gives a low income person about \$10 benefit each year, while a 25-cent increase in the minimum wage results in approximately a \$400 benefit for that same person.

So, again, will the minister agree to amend the bill to provide effectively a catch-up for October 1st, 2017, or is that amendment that my New Democratic colleagues and I will have to bring to try and get fairness for low-income people?

**Mr. Cullen:** I will agree with the member's premise that we have some catching up to do in so many different areas. And one of them is the basic personal exemption. We are so far behind the Canadian average that we have a lot of work to do.

I know the NDP never wanted to address it. They wanted to make sure that they were taxing low-income Manitobans as much as possible. We've taken a completely different approach. We want to leave more money in Manitobans' pockets, especially those at the low end of the spectrum. So that's why we're increasing the threshold where Manitobans start to pay income tax. And we're going to be indexing that as we move forward. That's a concept foreign to the previous government.

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Does this government plan to introduce different classes of employees that may get paid different levels of minimum wage?

**Mr. Cullen:** I think I understand the premise of the question.

Currently, there is tiers in—tiered minimum wages already in existence, and you will know that, whether it be security guards and/or certain construction levels. We are not doing anything additional to what exists at this point in time.

**Mr. Swan:** In preparing to introduce this bill, does the minister have any research or is he relying on any studies or any comments by anybody to suggest that the current minimum wage in Manitoba is a living wage?

**Mr. Cullen:** I'm not sure I understood what the member was seeking. There was—maybe the member could just clarify the question.

**Mr. Swan:** Yes. Does the member believe the current minimum wage in Manitoba is a living wage for low-income Manitobans?

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

Clearly, you know, we—when we looked at this legislation, we looked at what other jurisdictions were doing. We recognize that some political parties have a different view in terms of where they want to get to over the course of time, and, clearly, we've taken the approach that we—we're looking at having the indexation there based on the \$11 table, if you will—or base rate—indexing it to inflation going forward. We still think that will provide Manitoba—those that are actually on minimum wage in Manitoba, which are about 5 per cent of the work force, will still—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister's time is up.

**Mr. Allum:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a consensus across the House about when bills would be introduced and how they would proceed through the House.

Why did the minister take so long to introduce this bill?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I recognize that the members opposite don't always believe in consultation. We firmly do believe in consultation.

But it looks to me like there might be a willingness on behalf of opposition members to maybe move this legislation through the House and through the process, get it into committee stage. We—obviously, we have it here today; it's been introduced—second reading today. I think we could, you know, if members are in agreement, we could move this to committee and finalize the debate. And,

if members are excited about this legislation, we could have it passed here in the next couple of weeks.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, I'm glad the member has put on the record that different political parties have a different view of what minimum wage should be, and that's why for 17 years the minimum wage was raised each year, moving people closer and closer to a living wage. And I know the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) is unhappy with that, and I suppose he'll be supporting this bill as it is. We think it could be improved.

Could the minister, then—because he wasn't really responsive to the questions I asked—could the minister give us his view, then, of what a living wage is for Manitobans and whether that's a worthy goal for minimum wage policy?

**Mr. Cullen:** I guess in terms of the premise of the member's question, you know, if his view was that increasing the minimum wage year after year would get people out of poverty, then we should have low poverty rates in Manitoba. Well, quite frankly, after 17 years, exactly the opposite is true: highest poverty rates in Canada, less people were working at the time.

We're trying to get Manitobans back to work. We're trying to create the foundation to get Manitobans back to work and this is just one piece of the puzzle to get Manitobans back to work, and we're looking forward to continuing that foundation to get the facts right, get the foundation right and get Manitobans back to work.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The time for question period has now expired.

#### Debate

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Now is time for debate.

Any speakers?

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** This bill, The Minimum Wage Indexation Act, has many, many problems with it that we're going to articulate during the course of the afternoon, I'm sure, and will be said again and again when we get to the committee stage, and then will be said again and again over the years to come.

The minister ended the Q & A by saying he wants to get Manitobans back to work, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were working under our government, and one thing has become patently

clear, is that jobs are now deeply in question as a result of the austerity agenda taken by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), supported by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), supported by the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), supported by the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen). In fact, supported by the whole front bench of this particular government. *[interjection]*

Now, I hear a member already—I've only been up for a minute—already starting to heckle as he talks about the number of jobs being created. He fails to mention that Manitoba has already lost 14,000 full-time jobs. If he wants to brag about 6,000 part-time jobs that've been created, be my guest. We're on the—on record of supporting full-time jobs with full benefits and full wages for Manitobans.

Now, I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are any number of disappointments—*[interjection]* I see another member now talking across the floor, not having the respect. We're here into debate; we'd like the respect to be able to debate these issues without having to deal with the kind of heckling and the kind of talk that shows such a lack of respect for the people of Manitoba, especially those who make the least in our society, and it troubles me greatly for members of the government side to think that a debate over the minimum wage is a laughing matter and is a joke. It might be a joke for them; it might be a joke for their buddies and their business cronies; but it isn't a joke for people making the least amount in our society who need our support in this Legislature to make sure that they have the same security and the same opportunity at life as everybody else. That's what we stand for on this side of the House: a fair, more just, more equitable, more inclusive Manitoba for every Manitoban, not just doing what the business community tells us to do time after time.

\* (15:30)

Now, I want to say, to begin, that we are incredibly disappointed by the introduction of this bill at this late date, at this late hour, with only a few days left in this session. I think it needs to be said that this is something which wasn't announced in the Budget 2016, certainly should have been introduced in Budget 2017. And so it leaves a lot to be desired and a lot of explanation on the part of the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade to explain to this House why that announcement wasn't made on budget day, on the day it should have been

announced, rather than a month later, after the fact, and leaving Manitobans uncertain and unsure what the future holds when it comes to raising the minimum wage in Manitoba and ensuring that all Manitobans have a fair and equal chance for a good life that I think we would all agree in this House is what we're here to do, day in and day out.

Now, it's not so much that it just wasn't introduced on budget day as egregious of an oversight—and I don't really think it was an oversight, frankly. As egregious as that was, they could've done this. They could've raised the minimum wage. The government could've raised the minimum wage without introducing it into legislation like this. But since they have done it in legislation, we have to ask the question, why wasn't it introduced earlier when every other bill came forward with the government's agenda? Suddenly this is the outlier, suddenly this is the one that's sort of introduced at the 11th hour, and we have to ask ourselves, well, why would the government do that? Why would the government do that?

And the sad, sad reality, the only conclusion we can draw is that the government's playing politics with the interests of those who earn the least in our society, and I would suggest to members opposite that's never a good thing to do. You don't want to be on that side of an issue. You want to be sure that you're here doing right by the people of Manitoba, those who elected you and especially those earning minimum wage.

And it comes as a colossal disappointment to us—comes as a colossal disappointment to us—that this should be left until the eleventh hour, asking us to make—the official opposition to make way for this piece of government legislation when there's a whole other lineup of legislation that we actually haven't got to. There are Estimates that need to be taken care of, and suddenly—suddenly—out of nowhere, be it comes this piece of legislation. That is a colossal disappointment to us and shouldn't happen in this House, and it disappoints me that the Government House Leader (Mr. Micklefield) would allow that to happen and allow his Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Finance Minister and his Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) play politics, play a hyper-partisan politics—*[interjection]* And I can hear from the heckling as I speak that it is a hyper-partisan political issue for the government. It's not about doing right by the people who earn the least in our society, but, in fact, it's a hyper-partisan political maneuver to take attention off the fact that the

Premier's in colossal trouble with his own explanations, or lack thereof, about the way in which he communicates, about the way in which he puts—records his conflicts of interest forms and about his seeming inability to be straight and clear with the people of Manitoba. So we have a hyper-partisan political practice introduced into the House today to take attention off the Premier's unbelievable series of explanations about the issues that I just identified.

And to try to make—try to put, in some manner, that New Democrats will be standing in the way of an increase to the minimum wage, when from day one when this House first convened after the last election and every day thereafter, every member of this caucus has got up and asked a question of the government side, when are you going to raise the minimum wage? And we never got an answer. And then, suddenly, out of the blue, out of nowhere it just appears today. And that, I have to say, is an incredible and colossal disappointment. *[interjection]*

And I hear the Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler) also unable to concentrate on his own job, and here he is in the House heckling about kinds of issues which on this side of the House we take very, very seriously because it goes to the very core of who and what we are, and it speaks volumes at the same time about the government and who they are and they—and who they've decided to represent over the next four years. It won't be the people of Manitoba. It certainly won't be those earning the least in our society. Their obligation, and it appears their whole goal, is to make sure that the business community is happy and everybody else needs to suffer. And that shouldn't happen in 2017, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, I want to say that this bill starts in the most terrible way, and it does so because, prior to this introduction of the bill at the eleventh hour as we head toward breaking on the 1st of June, the government had already—at least, the Cabinet had already given themselves a huge raise, and they did it before any other action was taken. In fact, I think it was the first thing they did, was to give each member of Cabinet, and the other half member, a considerable raise, 20 per cent increase across the board, thousands upon thousands of dollars into their own personal pockets, and that, for the past 13 months, they've said to people earning the minimum wage, those who earn the least in our society, wait, get—stay—wait in line; don't be in a hurry. We've already got our raise as Cabinet;

we've already got our raise, says the Premier (Mr. Pallister), but you, who earn the least, you're going to have to wait until the eleventh hour.

I don't think that's what Manitobans wanted. I don't think that's what Manitobans voted for in the last election. I don't think it's the cover-government that they want, and, frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it offends Manitobans' sense of fairness and fair play. And so I have to say that, while we're glad to see some little increase in the minimum wage, it seems a colossal indictment of this government and what their priorities and who they govern for to have actually ensured a raise of 20 per cent for the Premier and every other Cabinet minister, while making people who earn the least in our society wait almost 13 months for what is—can only be described as a modest, modest increase to the minimum wage.

So I want to get on to that, because, as the House well knows, every year that we were in government over four elections—that is, re-elected by the people of Manitoba, not once, not twice, not three times, but four times, and, over the course of 17 years in government—we increased the minimum wage by a minimum of 25 cents every year on the way to creating a living wage for Manitobans. Prior to the last election, we put it on record that we would, in fact, be proceeding to raise the minimum wage by 50 cents in order to accelerate the living—making sure that Manitobans have access to a living wage even quicker than we had originally planned, and I think, as we go forward, we're going to make sure that, in fact, we get there even sooner.

And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's the kind of government that Manitobans want. They want a government that's actually responsive to the needs of all Manitobans, not just a particular sector, and it was interesting in question period today when a member from the government side gets up and he asks them, well, how will this please business, and I think in that question alone—it spoke volumes—it spoke volumes—about the kind of government that we have.

Now, one of the things that this bill does, and it's a very short bill so it doesn't take a lot of study, although to have it introduced just out of nowhere in the middle of the night and then suddenly the House is supposed to deal with it right away, as I've said earlier, was quite unfair, but I think, more than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and not only about the way in which this bill is being introduced, about the actual amount that's being increased, 15 cents an hour. So I defy any member of the government to tell us now

how that's going to improve, help, assist those making the least in our society.

\* (15:40)

Yes, it will result in a marginal increase to their overall pay at the end of the year, but it's certainly not going to be the kind of assistance that they were looking forward, especially—especially—because nothing happened last year. It's the government that had an opportunity to raise the minimum wage in 2016, and they refused to do it. They categorically, abjectly refused to raise the minimum wage in Manitoba for a full year, and then when they finally get around to it, when they finally decide at the eleventh hour what we have here is a formula in this bill, which, when calculated out would increase the minimum wage by 15 cents. And so I am challenging every government member to head off to the doorsteps of their constituents and brag about that. And you know what'll happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They'll be laughed off the doorstep. They'll say, you know, my—the person answering the door will say, my daughter, my son is a minimum wage worker; that's not going to do anything to improve their well-being. It's not going to do anything particularly to improve any stability in their life. And, most importantly, it's not going to do anything to make up for the terrible attack on students by increasing tuition by upwards of 5 per cent year over year for the next several years and at the same time also eliminating the tuition rebate program.

So, if government members want to go to the doorsteps of their constituents and they want to have this kind of conversation, I've got a feeling they're going to get considerable blowback from their constituents on this matter because, (1) Manitobans have a conscience, a social conscience, about doing right by everybody in our society; and, secondly, they'll look in—within their own family and they'll see their sons or their daughters or a nephew or a niece or somebody else in a vulnerable position in our society having to pay the price for a government that simply has shown they don't care about those who make the least in our society.

Another troubling aspect of this bill that defies any explanation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the provision in the bill that says nothing's going to happen on this bill until October 2017. Now, as I stand here today, this is May 15th, 2017, and so that's another four or five months ahead of us before that paltry 15 cents becomes the law. It's about 17 or 18 months after the government was elected in the

first place. But if this was really a priority, if this really mattered to members of the government, if this is really something that was a central concern for the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, (Mr. Cullen), if it was a central concern of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), if it was a central concern of the Premier (Mr. Pallister), then it should've been in the bill, that it happened right away, not five months from now. That's a slap in the face to those earning the least in our society. It tells them that the government simply doesn't care about them. Oh, yes, we'll get around, the bill sort of implies; we'll get around to raising the minimum wage at some point in the future. Don't expect a lot, only 15 cents, so don't expect a lot, and also you're going to have to wait for it, but, you know, sooner or later—sooner or later—it's actually going to happen.

Well, that's not good enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At a minimum, one would've expected the government to table legislation that says as of May 15th, 2017, the minimum wage will increase by X amount. That would've been at least something to grab onto. Instead, we're told, as the bill tells us, that it's going to be another five months before the government gets around to doing anything about it, and that's not right. In fact, as I said, that's an insult to those who make the least in our society.

But what should've been included in this bill, and I have a feeling among my colleagues that there will be several amendments that will be put forward when it comes to this particular bill. And I see great concurrence among my friends and colleagues on this side of the House. What should've happened is not only should there have been—if they were only going to 15 cents, should've been 15 cents right away. It should've been built on 15 cents from last year. This bill should've been made retroactive at least to the Budget 2016, if not, to the very first day this government was sworn in. And instead, they've refused to do that. There's nothing—no retroactive provision in this bill.

So already those making the minimum wage, who have to little to look forward to in the future, have already fallen behind by a year or more when that shouldn't happen. And so we take exception to the kind of timing of this bill, the way in which it was put forward, the failure to increase it by an amount that would actually make a difference in the lives of those who earn the least, and then not to make it retroactive to the preceding year when the minimum wage was frozen at the very time that Cabinet gave themselves a huge raise suggests to us

that something that's not quite right is happening with this bill; something untoward is going on.

And as I said earlier, it's because this is a government trying to distract Manitobans from their failure on a whole range of issues, trying to pigeonhole the opposition by introducing a bill way after the point at which it should have been introduced and then by saying, well, it's a priority and—for them, and then it's clearly not because the increase in the minimum wage isn't going to happen until at least October, and even then we're not certain exactly what's going to go down.

So I think I can safely say for members on our side of the House who have made it the reason for being an elected official in the first place, to speak and fight for those who have the least in our society, to speak and fight for those who may not be able to speak for themselves, to speak and fight for those who don't enjoy a big, huge house on Wellington Avenue and several garages on Wellington Avenue, to speak for those people. That's what motivated us to stand for election. That's what we did over four elections in 17 years and that's what's we're going to continue to do as the—Her Majesty's official opposition, because the most important thing to us is creating a society where everyone matters, where everyone belongs and everyone has an equitable opportunity to create a happy and productive lives for themselves and their families. And, instead, we have a government that refuses to do so.

It's quite ironic, as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that at the very time the government raises Cabinet's salaries, at the very time that they froze the minimum wage, at the very time that they are imposing what is clearly an unconstitutional, illegal law to impose wage freezes on over 100,000 public servants in this province, at the same time that they've done all that, it's taken them forever to get around to trying to at least do something for those who earn the least.

And I have to say that when you put all of those factors together: an austerity agenda, cuts to education, cuts to health, deregulation of health and safety matters, deregulation of environmental standards, when you put all of the government's agenda, it's quite clear that they have decided to govern on behalf of the 2 per cent and not on behalf of the rest of Manitobans.

That's not a good place for any government to be and I think they're going to find—members of the government, as they go knock on doors, as they go talk to their constituents about it, they're going to say



to them, you know, you didn't campaign on any of this, and this isn't why we elected you and this was not part of the plan. Why are you going in this direction that really is going to take Manitoba in a downward spiral that has the potential to cause untold damage to Manitobans in the east and in the west and in the south and almost certainly in northern Manitoba?

\*(15:50)

If—the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), when asked on who—asked—when asked who he consulted on this bill, talked about the Labour Management Review Committee. Apparently, there was no consultation that extended beyond that. He says, oh, that there was 20,000 people allegedly consulted in their budget, but we've had nothing tabled to prove or to demonstrate that that's even remotely true.

But we know for sure, because the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade said as much, he didn't talk to one person who made minimum wage. He certainly wouldn't have had extensive meetings with Make Poverty History, who has demonstrated, quite clearly, that Manitobans need to get on the path of increasing the minimum wage—and I thank my friend from St. Boniface for that—increasing the minimum wage and of ensuring there are a full spectrum of supports for those making the least in our society in order to ensure, as I've said more than a few times, it's going to cause great and significant harm for Manitobans, especially young people, I think, but not only just young people. We know for a fact, if you've done the research, that it's mostly women and, in many cases, single women, making the minimum wage.

So not only is this legislation a colossal disappointment, it focuses on women who are working overtime to ensure the well-being of their homes and their children and their families, and the government is saying well, we don't care about them either; they're a side issue; they're not a priority. There are—they should just take some harsh painful medicine. That isn't right, isn't fair, isn't equitable, isn't inclusive, and shows that the government really doesn't care for everyone or that everyone belongs, but only are really interested in making sure that their friends in the business community don't have to do their share and their part in making sure that their employees are in a good and stable position.

So I want to make sure that others have a chance to debate this bill. There will be, I'm sure, some

plentiful excuses from the government side on the issues that we've tried to raise already in the course of this debate—the lateness of the bill, the freeze for a year, the fact that it doesn't go back retroactively, the fact that at 15 cents an hour—which is actually only 7 and a half cents over two years, really, when you think about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker—really doesn't address the key issues that have made—been made by poverty advocates. It doesn't address the key issues made by my colleagues on this side of the House, and it doesn't address the priorities of Manitobans who want to be sure that we have a society that's fair, just, equitable and inclusive on everyone.

We will be putting forward amendments to this bill; you can be certain of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is too little and too late, but we can say that, if the government agrees to the amendments that we put forward, we look forward to their support to standing with people who make the least in our society, as we do each and every day.

Thank you.

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services):** And, indeed, it's always an honour to get up and speak to legislation, in this particular case, Bill 33, the employment standards code amendment act. And I'd like to thank my colleagues for allowing me the opportunity to put a few words on the record.

I would, first of all, like to reflect a little bit on our past weekend. Friday was Manitoba Day—Manitoba is 147 years old, and when you look around, we're looking pretty good for 147.

It was a great opportunity to host a volunteer appreciation event on Friday in my constituency in Dugald and hand out a whole bunch of awards, and we know that, amongst other things, this province is known for its volunteerism and for its generosity, and had the opportunity to thank a lot of very good men and women who spent a lot of time giving of themselves. In fact, the Oakbank and Dugald beautification committees came forward, and we presented them each with a flag and they do just a great job making sure that our communities look wonderful.

And also would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all the mothers and wish them all the best, one day late for Mother's Day, and we appreciate what they do and what they've done for us. It was wonderful to see the ministerial statements and the responses that came; that was great to see, and nice to see when we get together as a Legislature

and honour those individuals like our moms. That was a very nice touch, and those that organized it, I'd like to thank them for that as well.

And one of the things that we should agree on but we don't seem to agree on in this Legislature is that it is long overdue, and it is something, I know, that has been talked about in Manitoba. It is something that's been done in other jurisdictions. It was long overdue that we indexed increases in minimum wage to the inflation rate.

In fact, I was going to try to get up and ask a couple of questions of the minister when it was pointed out that I was not allowed to ask a question, but I since then got my answer. This is in addition to the adjustment in the basic deduction. And basic deduction is one of those very good policies, but it doesn't make for the best politics because you explain to people you actually pay less taxes. You take more money home. And people don't quite get the whole taxation thing and aren't interested in that, but adjusting the basic deduction is very important, and it's a complement piece to what we're talking about today.

I would suggest that the adjusting the basic deduction, if the NDP hadn't left our finances in such appalling shape, which they did, it—you know, our government certainly would have liked to have done even more, and over the years, we will keep adjusting it. But that is a very important component because what it does is it means that individuals who are earning the least get to keep more of their money. And what you have under the NDP, under the socialists across the way—what they want to do is increase people's wages and then tax them more. And, de facto, what happens is they think they're earning more and their take-home is less.

And that's one of the shameful secrets that we find across the way when it comes to NDP socialist governments—is that they want it to look good. What they don't want people to do is look at what actually takes place, and people actually take home less. So, again, the adjustment on the basic deduction is very important if you go and you look at provinces west. I believe Alberta is somewhere in the 15 to 18 thousand dollars. I would suggest to members of this Legislature that's not something we could do imminently soon, but it is something that we should be looking at because what it does is it takes people in that bracket, and their money is basically tax-free. And that is a—an important part.

In this particular piece of legislation, it builds on that. And what it does is it goes in for a indexation. And if we would have had this the last 15 years, we would have seen a predictable rate; business knows what's going to be coming; they know there's going to be a rate increase. What I particularly like about it—and it was going to be one of my questions to the minister, but he did clarify it for me—that, in the case where there is no inflation or if we saw de-inflation, wages don't go down. They stay where they are.

But what this does is it allows minimum wage to continuously go up. It's not beholden that at election time, where we saw members opposite, the NDP, always like to make big fanfare of it, and it wasn't quite so big fanfare when it was between elections, where this is just something predictable. And it's a very good measure.

\* (16:00)

And for those of us who've travelled and—the member for fort giver—Fort Garry-Riverview spoke about going door to door and canvassing, and I'd like to point out to him, I did quite a bit of that; in fact, even had the opportunity to canvass in his constituency. And one of the things that I found out was that Manitobans were very concerned about the fact that he raised the PST on them, that they felt that he had taken away their right to a referendum, that he had denied them the right for their democratic vote on the PST increase. That's what I found people were talking at the door when we were in his constituency.

And, more importantly, when you cross the city and the province and you talk to individuals, what people are looking for is stability. What they're looking for is predictability. And that's what Bill 33 does for individuals.

I was able to take a bit of time because we were canvassing, you know, two years out from the last election, and had the opportunity to go into a lot of different communities, and individuals were expressing that what they also wanted was opportunity. They wanted the ability to move up and, perhaps, own their own business or move into a management position. And a lot of that disappeared under the NDP.

And now, we've seen something happen that hasn't happened in a long time. It's an endangered species, and that is the business optimism that we now see in the province of Manitoba. It's back again, the endangered species of the business community, which is optimism. It has revived itself and it's back,

and we need to have a strong small-business group in Manitoba. They are the ones who hire a lot of those individuals that enter the market, their level entry, who start to get a bit of a resumé. And for those of us who did work in retail, you had to start somewhere, and you usually started small. I had the opportunity to start at Eaton's department store and enjoyed that very much and worked at the Eaton's store downtown.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was a good opportunity to get experience and, from there, you moved on and sought other jobs. So what we have to make sure is that, as we move along, that we have a business environment where people want to open up their own business and hire individuals and bring them on. We want to make sure that they're earning a fair wage, and we believe that, by putting in this predictable cost-of-living increase, that not just does the business know what kind of increase they're going to get, so does the individual who's working.

But I'd also like to point out to members is that—and I found this in my own experience as a business person—that where you had really strong employees, you had to pay far more than the minimum wage because they were so good they'd be scouting. In fact, I can remember the last of the '90s and '98 and '99, the summer games were coming to Manitoba, and it was near impossible to keep an employee. We used to offer two, three dollars above minimum wage just for training. We'd pay for their training hours and we'd just beg people, but please, please don't use this to bid yourself up to another job, which is invariably what they did. I think we went through 15 employees in about three weeks because they would work a week and then they'd go find a different employer and try to bid themselves up to a better job. And we found that we had to end up paying far more, and we had some very good individuals that wanted to work for us, and we would pay them more. And that's how we kept them.

So this doesn't mean that this is exactly what business has to be. In fact, you will find, in a lot of instances, business will pay more because they want to keep their employees that once they've trained and they've vested in them and they find that they're reliable, they then pay them more to keep them. And the minimum wage, by and large, is where they start at. And—in the case of myself—what we'd always paid for people for their training, we would give them at least seven to 10 hours of training, which we would pay for, and—so they would understand the business and they'd understand what it was that we did. So we

always felt that we paid more than minimum wage, and we kept our good employees. And, over the years, I was very pleased with the employees. In fact, a lot of them are very good friends of mine to this day. And they're now on to professional jobs and doing really good in the economy. And often we get together, and they laugh about things that used to go on and clients that would come in and customers that would come in, and they enjoyed it. And they always appreciated the fact that we would pay well for the work that they did. They would—we would pay them well to keep them because that was the point.

So, Madam Speaker, we've heard some very negative and some slightly angry speeches from members across the way. The member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) views his cup continuously as empty, even when it's full, and this is actually a very, very good way to be dealing with minimum wage. I think that when this bill comes into force and people realize that every year they're going to get an increase, it's going to be compound every year. It's a cost-of-living increase on the previous year's cost-of-living increase, that they're going to find that this is—this ends up being one of those, you know, they were for it before they opposed it.

And we want to make sure that Manitobans realize that we're on the forefront on this piece of legislation. Fact, I suspect, you know, maybe if the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) had survived all the attacks within caucus and he would've survived the election, this is maybe something that they would've brought in. It's a very smart piece of legislation. I'd like to commend the minister responsible for having brought it in, and I know that out in the community, this is something that is going to very much be appreciated, with the coming of a lot of new Canadians to our province and a lot of young people now going out into the workforce. I've got three children who are now out. Two have already got jobs. The third one, she's still looking right now.

So, you know, they will appreciate this, that although they started at a minimum wage, that if it goes up every year automatically because of cost of living and they work hard and they will get paid accordingly. And I—fact, my son came home on Friday and he said, I am so dead tired. I think by 9:30 he was in bed. He had worked so hard, and that's what we want. We want our young people out there getting good summer jobs and earning some money and being able to put some money aside so when they are back at university, they can pay for

their expenses the best they can and, you know, we want to do that.

We want to make sure that there's also a climate out there that people will open up businesses and will hire individuals—and they will hire individuals, and we have to be careful that we don't swing one way too wildly or the other. We've heard the very angry speech from the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) and the kinds of things that he was talking about, and I would caution him that we'd be very careful that we don't swing the pendulum too much one way or the other because that way, you can actually harm jobs. You can actually close down jobs. You can close down small businesses.

We believe this is a right way to go, it's a very balanced, it's a very middle of the road. It's a very good piece of legislation. I encourage members opposite to support it and move it on and allow Manitobans to benefit from this legislation. Again, it's not just young people; it's anybody who decides to enter the workforce, they will know that there is a predictability, that there's an increase coming, and it's based on cost of living.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record and look forward to the further continued debate. Thank you.

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]* Well, thank you. Thank you, thank you.

\* (16:10)

I see that the members opposite finally recognize that they should start listening to good points that are going to be put forward, because that's part of what I want to touch on here in my talk about this. You know, the government has had, well, they've had well over a year to introduce legislation to raise the minimum wage, and they chose not to. And now they want to introduce it and try and get it forced through and put into place by the time we rise the 1st of June, which then means that that would limit debate. And the whole point of debate, at least my understanding, limited though it is, of what debate in this House is supposed to be about, is an exchange of ideas where somebody introduces a bill and then people talk about what's good about it and what's bad about it and perhaps make suggestions of how it could be improved. But, really, what the government is attempting to do here by introducing a bill, which—we certainly wouldn't want to stop the bill from

passing, at least not some form of the bill from passing; obviously, we have some ideas about what's wrong with this bill in particular and I'm reasonably confident that as we go forward through the committee stage, there'll be some amendments that will attempt to make a bad piece of legislation better.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, certainly, nobody on this side disagrees that hard-working Manitobans that work for minimum wage deserve to get a raise, as they deserved to get a raise last year, but those pleas fell on deaf ears. This government chose to very cold-heartedly not give the most vulnerable Manitobans a chance to better themselves.

So, again, the point of debate, although sometimes it may seem like the point of a debate is lost in the Chamber here when people talk and maybe people don't listen or whatever, the point of this is to try and make legislation better or to convince the government why a particular piece of legislation shouldn't pass. And that's the point of standing up today, is to say that this bill doesn't go 'farth' enough in addressing the shortcoming—the shortcoming that's been forced on hard-working Manitobans; the shortcoming where there was no increase in minimum wage last year; the shortcoming when we talk about 15 cents—15 cents.

If you worked eight hours a day, which a goodly portion of minimum wage workers, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, don't work eight hours a day, but if you did manage to find a minimum wage job that you could work at for eight hours a day, you'd make the princely sum of \$1.20. Now, while it's laudable that the government says they want to change the tax regime so that more poor people will pay less in tax, I'd suggest that perhaps we should quit creating more poor people that allow working people to actually earn a decent standard of living that they can actually get ahead in the world. What does \$1.20 buy you? Well, I was just noticing in a newspaper that—doesn't quite cut it, but maybe on sale they get some neck bones for \$1.90. You certainly couldn't buy yourself a steak on the increase that they're talking about here. Now, if you had a family to feed, I'm not sure how far those neck bones would go. I suppose some people opposite might buy neck bones to feed their dogs, certainly not to feed their kids, and that's really a sad commentary, that that's the kind of respect that they have for hard-working Manitobans is—to suggest that this paltry sum that they've suggested, and really, it's not 15 cents, is it. When you look at the fact that they haven't had a raise since 2015, it works out to like seven and a half cents, which is really

even more mean spirited than the 15 cents. So they're taking people that have already been held back, through no fault of their own, but the government has decided that last year, no increase for poor, hard-working Manitobans; hold them back. This year, they introduced a budget, and I don't know, did they just forget that there was hard-working Manitobans that hadn't been talked about in the budget? Or has there been enough from this side of the House and from hard-working Manitobans to say that, we need a raise, you know, that what you've offered so far is not acceptable.

So, as part of the legislative process, as we move through the process, I hope that Manitobans will come out and tell this government what's wrong with this legislation—not that I really have any great faith that they'll actually be listened to because it's becoming abundantly clear that this government only listens to the rich business people. They certainly don't listen to union people.

I mean, if you looked at some of the committee hearings that have taken place already, there's been a multitude of people that came out to express opposition to the bills that have been put forward by this government, while there's been, at best, from the committees I've been at, anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, three presenters that came out in favour of it.

And let's just talk about some of those presenters. I mean, one of them is a perennial presenter at every committee, and he presents all kinds of charts and graphs and purports that those are facts, that 90 per cent of Manitobans think this. Well, in fact, once you drill down and start looking at what those charts represent is (a) either out of date, (b) it really talks about 90 per cent of the 5 or 6 per cent of their members that respond. So it's not talking about what 90 per cent of Manitobans expressed as a point of view; it's 90 per cent of their members that bothered to respond—that's their point of view.

And, continually, we see that that's the kind of presenters, that's the kind of people that this government is listening to. They purport to represent a vast number of people, continually show statistics that clearly indicate that only a small, small, small, small, small minority of their members even support the things that this government is putting forward, but because they're a lobby group, that's who the government listens to, because they're a lobby group for big business. You know, that's kind of a shame that they don't really listen to people that come out,

and at various committee meetings, we've had not just union people that came out and spoke against what the government was trying to do, we've had just plain old, everyday, ordinary, everyday working people. Some committees, although I missed it, there was many professional people came out and talked about what was wrong with what a government was proposing in a bill. And they ignore all of that because this government listens to a very select group of people while they say they—they're the most transparent and open government that there's ever been and they keep making these grandiose claims that clearly aren't true, because they're not open; they don't share information from reports and a bunch of other things.

But, more importantly, they don't listen to the bulk of Manitobans, whether it's the paltry increase in minimum wage, whether it's closing ERs, whether it's things dealing with northern health, this government is out of touch, out of tune with average, everyday, working Manitobans. They only listen to a select group that meets with their ideological drives, and most of this ideology has been debunked, shown to be not what's best for an economy.

\* (16:20)

You know, there's other things in this specific piece of legislation that may be concerning. You know, they talk about, in section 8(1), that the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council may make a regulation before April 1st in any year determining that no adjustment is to be made to the minimum wage. So, while they say that the minimum wage is going to be adjusted automatically to the rate of inflation, then they put another clause in there that says, well, unless we decide differently.

So what criteria will they use for making this decision that there be no increase in minimum wage for a particular year? Well, they've actually sort of maybe almost spelled it out. Regulation made—may be made under subsection (1) only if the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council is satisfied that economic indicators warrant it, such as a recession or a forecasted recession. So they'll get to decide at some point in time that oh, gee, something has changed; no increase for you this year, because golly, there might be a recession—might be. Not that there is, but there might be. So they'll decide, no increase for you; oh, gee, no recession happened, but it might happen next year.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

And these are things that they will decide in regulation that don't have to come before this House, don't have to be openly discussed and debated, which makes this bill even more 'eagerious' than what it is initially. You know, initially, it's bad that it's holding you to a paltry 15 cents, but now, based on some prediction, I don't know who will make the prediction; I guess, it could be the government. It could be some other—maybe the Fraser Institute or maybe the Canadian institute of small businesses will make a prediction that, oh, there's going to be a recession. So then, minimum wage workers will get no raise.

So, really, open and transparent goes out the window again, because it won't be done in an open and public way. Most working Manitobans won't find out they're not getting a raise until all of a sudden they wake up one day and don't have it. So, you know, that's partially what's wrong with this bill.

I guess the biggest problem that we have with the bill is the timing of when it got introduced. It should've been introduced a year and a half ago. It should've been introduced with this government's first budget. It should've been introduced with this government's second budget. None of that took place.

Now, here we are winding down towards the end of a very busy legislative session with a lot of bills left to debate and a lot of business to be done before this House rises, and then they decided to introduce a substandard piece of legislation that needs—that needs to have public scrutiny, that people need to be aware of what this government is trying to foist on working Manitobans, that they're going to say, well, we gave you a raise. What do you want from us?

And we certainly don't want to be seen as holding up those hard-working Manitobans' ability to earn a raise even if it is a paltry 15 cents, or seven and a half cents over the course of two years.

As bad as that is, we won't stop it from passing, but it doesn't mean that we will give up the ability, the requirement to debate it to make sure that the government hears loud and clear that this bill is insufficient. We'll also make sure that we encourage Manitobans to come out to committee; not that we think for one minute second that this government will listen to people that give up their time to come to committee, because that's certainly not the history that we've seen with this government at committees. Not once have they listened at the majority of people that have come out to those committee hearings, which is really too bad, because if they'd taken the

time to listen, they would've learned a lot, as I'm sure they would learn a lot if people come out and tell them their heartfelt stories of how they can't afford to feed their families.

We talked a little bit earlier, Madam Speaker, about the \$1.20 a day that you would earn with this increase. A dollar and twenty cents. That's all it will be if you worked 40 hours a week, which the majority of people that work minimum wage jobs may not, in fact, work 40. That would be \$6 a week. Six dollars a week. Wow. That's quite the increase. I've got to say that when you start looking at what it really means, then it becomes even more blatant that this government doesn't respect hard-working people in this province. It becomes even more blatant that this piece of legislation is an insult to Manitobans. It's an insult to subject hard-working Manitobans, to say you got a raise when the raise is so small that, as we've pointed out earlier, you couldn't possibly even buy some neck bones to feed your family with because they cost more than \$1.20.

So there's things in there that I'm glad that I asked the question during the question and answer portion of this proceeding about does the government plan to introduce other classes of employees that may be subject to different levels of minimum wage. And I was glad to hear the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) quite clearly state that that was not their intention, and they were not going to introduce other classes of employees. So one little bright spot in an otherwise gloomy and dreary piece of legislation.

So we want to make sure that the minister—that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) understands we in the NDP caucus are not opposed to hard-working Manitobans getting a raise. We are opposed to the insult that this government is calling a raise. We are opposed to the miniscule amount that this government believes that hard-working Manitobans should get over the course of two years.

We want to make sure that the government listens—not just to us, but listens to people—listens to hard-working Manitobans that say this is not sufficient. This is not what's going to be sustainable for people to feed their families. And, you know, we need to make sure that the government understands we're just not talking about a kid that—looking for a few extra beans after work—or, after school—to, you know, buy a new video game. That's not who we're talking about that earns minimum wage. We're talking about single-income parents—single parents

that are trying to raise a family. We're talking about people that are struggling to get enough hours in. We're talking about people that need a sustainable income—a sustainable, livable income in this province.

Fifteen cents an hour doesn't cut it, doesn't make this minimum wage a sustainable income for anybody. Certainly is not going to help a single mother who's facing increased costs, some of which are being planned by this government, that will make their life less affordable. And while the government stands up and talks about the tax bracket change that works out to—what's the number that—\$10 or something that—*[interjection]*—\$10 a year that that would equate to.

They think that's going to raise somebody out of poverty; \$10 a year.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 10 minutes remaining.

I have been informed that a recorded vote has been requested in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255. Accordingly, the House will now resolve into the Chamber section of Supply to consider that request.

#### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

\* (16:30)

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

#### Report

**Mrs. Colleen Mayer (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255):** Mr. Chairperson, in the section of Committee of Supply meeting in room 255—considered the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training, the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) moved the following motion: that line 16.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

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

**Mr. Chairperson:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

*All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.*

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Chairperson:** In the section of Committee of Supply meeting in room 255, according—the Estimates of Department of Education and Training, the honourable member for Fort Rouge moved that line 16.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

The 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 Fort Rouge.

*A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 13, Nays 30.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The motion is accordingly defeated.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The hour being past 5—*[interjection]* past—being 5, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

#### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

\* (15:30)

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

This section of Committee of Supply will now resume considerations of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

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

The floor is now open for questions; however, I understand the honourable minister has a statement.

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** In response to the matter taken under advisement when we were last in Committee of Supply, the department has undergone a substantial reorganization, and in order to make year-over-year comparisons and adjustments of the previous year's Estimate figures necessary in almost every case, the adjustments reflect recovery amounts from within the department and from other areas of government.

After review of all funds, funding was consolidated under Child and Youth Mental Health

Strategy within Healthy Child's Manitoba Office. As indicated in our last Committee of Supply session, all ongoing funding in 2017-2018 has been maintained at the same level as 2016-2017, and although it appears to be an increase of \$100,000 compared to the '16-17 print, the change reflects the consolidation of funding. The \$100,000 was transferred from the last year's Healthy Child Manitoba Office financial assistance and grants appropriation.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge):** Thank you for that clarification and update. There are a number of footnotes in various parts of the Estimates book. I'm looking at one on page 57, footnote 1. They all read similar to FTE reduction applied to executive position as a result of restructuring and management streamlining initiatives, so, again, related to reorganization within the department.

So, rather than, I guess, going through footnote by footnote, I'm just wondering if I can ask across the department how many less full-time equivalent staff positions there are as a result of these changes identified or demarcated with this sort of proviso?

**Mr. Wishart:** At the executive level there are seven less full-time equivalents, and that is our contribution towards the executive management reduction that our government has undertaken.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister tell the committee which positions those seven are?

**Mr. Wishart:** I appreciate the question. What we have done, of course, as government, is reduce the size of government overall. Members, of course, certainly aware we have reduced the size of Cabinet from 18 to 12. There are certain benefits to that as well, because we're working together much more as ministers, so we have much better relationship, and we've been exchanging information much more readily, and I think that's a very positive situation. And it's all being done to try and give Manitobans better government. We've also reduced the number of political staff in a sizable way across government, and I think that that too is very important and it puts more resources available to front lines.

In regards to the senior staff within the department, the assistant-ADM, sorry, ADM of schools program has become the senior ADM for Healthy Child Committee and the K-to-12 system, so we've amalgamated some roles. ADM Advanced Learning has become the Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Development ADM. Executive director from Student Aid has become the senior

director for post-secondary education and Student Aid, of course. Executive director of adult ed has also been put into that position, senior director for post-secondary. Director of International Education has become—the position has become the director of immigration and international education, and I think the member probably sees the rationale there, because many of our students were part of the immigration program.

Executive director of industry and training has been eliminated and the executive director of Curriculum Development and Implementation has been eliminated.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, the minister mentioned there was seven, and I think I caught two positions eliminated there.

Can he provide the list of the other ones eliminated?

**Mr. Wishart:** So, just to make it clear, and perhaps I didn't make it as clear, when I talked about the admin schools program, it had been amalgamated, that reduced a position at the same time, so, in that case, ADM of schools program was eliminated, so that followed through for the five, and then the two were eliminated completely.

**Mr. Kinew:** And so, just to be clear, were these positions staffed at the time of the amalgamation or were they vacant?

**Mr. Wishart:** Just in summary, and I can break it down if the member prefers, we had three people in those positions on an acting basis, three people that were incumbent that were eliminated and one retirement.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, maybe just the people on the acting basis, were they transferred to other positions in government or were they terminated?

**Mr. Wishart:** They actually went back to the positions they had been in previously. They had been moved on acting basis, so they went back to their substantive positions.

**Mr. Kinew:** What additional targets are there for this executive restructuring within the Department of Education?

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Wishart:** We are still evaluating at the next level down, which would be the director level, which positions are valuable and which are not. We have no



current plans at this point in time to make any changes, but evaluation continues.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, just for the sake of clarity, there is a review that may result in other reductions or amalgamations. Is that correct?

**Mr. Wishart:** Yes, absolutely. There's a review going on all the way through the department, and whether that results in reductions or not remains to be seen.

**Mr. Kinew:** Are there any changes being planned to the number of school divisions in Manitoba? Like, is there any amalgamations of school divisions being considered at this point?

**Mr. Wishart:** What we're doing in regards to that is we—and as we have promised the school divisions that there would be a consultation process, there will be a discussion on the structure of education in Manitoba. That hasn't gone out yet in terms of any great detail, but we did promise the school boards a number of different times, a number of different ways, that we would consult with them before any changes were made in terms of the number of school divisions in school boards in Manitoba, so that is pending.

**Mr. Kinew:** What is the timeline for that discussion?

**Mr. Wishart:** We did commit to a full consultation process. We haven't put a final date on that yet as the call for proposals and such is still in development, and that will determine, I think, how long the consultation goes on. But we did commit to being very detailed in terms of—the funding of the schools would be part of that program as well, and I think that's of great interest to all of the school divisions and all the school boards in Manitoba.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, just to clarify, is there a request for proposals currently in the development that would look specifically at amalgamating school divisions?

**Mr. Wishart:** There is a request for proposal in development, but it is not specific to a number of school divisions in the province. As I said, funding of schools would also be part of that process. And a few other issues are being developed as well.

**Mr. Kinew:** And what is the scope of consideration on the funding for schools program under that RFP?

**Mr. Wishart:** As that's still being developed, I can't answer that with any definitive answer. It's still in the

process. We having discussions on what we want to see as part of that as we speak.

**Mr. Kinew:** Would this include changes to local taxation?

**Mr. Wishart:** It's possible. That is not in it at the moment, but is something that is being discussed.

**Mr. Kinew:** And what other changes in the public school financing might be included in this RFP?

**Mr. Wishart:** In terms of public-school financing, it's mostly around the funding of schools that—I mean, I think that everyone knows that that formula has been in place for a large number of years. There is fairly widespread level of—you won't call it dissatisfaction, but awareness that it is not meeting the needs, so that is probably the biggest portion of it. We are not, at this time, making any definitive decisions on taxation powers. We are—as I said, talking about whether there should be school board amalgamations, will likely be included in that, so, indirectly, it has an impact on finances in school divisions.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, does that mean that you'd rule out—or that the minister would rule out changes to taxation authority as part of this process?

**Mr. Wishart:** What we said to the school divisions and, through them, to a number of parents' groups as well, is that we would do a thorough consultation as to whether or not that was somewhere Manitobans wanted to go. But we have said we would—we will consult with Manitobans in regards to their intentions on this.

We've heard—and going back to the election, of course, we heard, and I'm sure the member heard as well, that there is some dissatisfaction out there as to how educated—education is funded, so we will certainly be going through a very thorough listing process. That's what we're setting up, why we want to take a little bit of time and make sure that we include everything that should be part of this process and not do a rush job, make sure that we cover all of the areas.

As the member knows, funding for education in Manitoba is a complex issue with long history. And, before any changes are contemplated, I think, we have—we're obliged to do a thorough job of consultation with players that are active in the roles now, but also with Manitobans.

It's probably the most common unsolicited opinion that we get at events is you need to do something about that, but not always are people that pass that comment on, either in the number of school divisions or how the taxation is generated, are they fully aware of how the system currently works and so, I think, that's important, that we do a very thorough job of explaining to people what we currently have before we consider any changes.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, to be clear, the—this consultation, this review, it would include consultation with stakeholder organizations, representing, say, parents, school boards, superintendents, stuff like that, but there will also be a public component as part of this?

**Mr. Wishart:** Yes, there'll be a public one. Some public meetings is what we anticipate, as well as the online option. In all honestly, we've actually had very good responses on the—in the online one, both for the budget and I know that Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox) has had a lot of input in her online consultations and we see that as one that we get—gives a lot of people some options to an express an opinion, but, before you get good input from those sources, you need to do a good job of making sure that people understand an issue as complex as education funding has become.

**Mr. Kinew:** Will the minister ensure that in this online consultation that it would not be possible for the same person to submit multiple responses to the request, as was the case with the Sustainable Development survey?

**Mr. Wishart:** I'm aware of the problem that arose there. We can do certain elements to prevent that, in terms of email addresses, make sure that they are not duplicated and—but, if people wish to go to the trouble of setting up different email addresses, it's very hard to prevent that possibility. But we will certainly do our best to make sure that we are getting realistic and original comments on that, not just duplications from the same source, but people can be very creative when it comes to expressing opinions, if they so wish.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I guess the other—the yin to the yang of taxation authority is the operating grants provided to the school divisions. So is it the minister's expectation that this RFP and then the discussion process which follows would lead to recommendations about what the provincial share of funding the K-to-12 system via the school division should look like?

**Mr. Wishart:** We expect that we will get some input regarding what should be done with provincial funding for school divisions. I'm not—I wouldn't suggest for a moment that that will be the sole factor in determining, but because we're talking about the funding of schools, it's—it'll be, overall, in many regards, it'll—not appropriate, really, to prejudge or speculate on the outcomes of a public consultation. This is a real consultation, and we don't want to eliminate anything before we begin the process. We fully expect to get lots of input on this. I would dare say that the funding of education in Manitoba is, in many ways, at least as contentious an issue as the overall budget in the province, so I expect substantive numbers in terms of input regarding the funding of education, which—one of the reasons we're being very careful how we put this call for proposal together, make sure that we cover all of the needs in all of the areas.

**Mr. Kinew:** And would the report or the, you know, the consultation process commissioned out of this RFP also look at capital funding and the Public Schools Finance Board?

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Wishart:** I think it would be fair to say that it'll touch on the—this. I think the two things are somewhat inseparable, but it's not really focused around that particular need. We know that we have a number of students in the system and we need to meet their needs. You know, I think that's part of larger government responsibility to make sure the infrastructure's in place and in good condition to use.

The member's heard me talk about the need for catching up on some of the maintenance, in particular, in the public schools that we have out there now, and in particular dealing with safety and security. Some of that I don't think is subject to a public consultation as much as it is the responsibility of government to make sure that that's in place.

**Mr. Kinew:** When will the RFP be released?

**Mr. Wishart:** We don't have a final completion date. I said we were taking our time with this, making sure that it was all inclusive. We are in the process, but we haven't determined what final date we would have yet. There's a lot of considerations in this, and not the least of which is making sure that it does not, at a critical stage in terms of consultation, during the school board election process. We need to be separate from that process and not be a factor in that process. That is one complicating factor.

**Mr. Kinew:** Will the RFP be released this budget year?

**Mr. Wishart:** It is possible, but not certain.

**Mr. Kinew:** And so, you know, just having, you know, sort of walked through this with the minister and hearing that there's, you know, after the RFP there'll be consultation with various stakeholder organizations, there'll be a public feedback period, including public meetings, and then, of course, there'll be the development of some sort of report, presumably, at the end of this, which would be provided to the minister and Cabinet, I assume.

What is the estimated, you know, length of that period? Is that about a year from start to finish in that process that we'd be looking at?

**Mr. Wishart:** Well, I thank the member for the question. It is impossible, really, to speculate exactly what would—how long this might take. As I said, we have determined that we want it to be thorough in the process of going out there to the public, and setting timelines around that, it's definitely too early to do that.

We know that they can be done more quickly, but we want to be sure with an issue of this importance that we do a very thorough job of consulting with Manitobans and that they feel that. I think one of the biggest factors in this whole thing is how long is it going to take to have the background information prepared so that people can understand how funding currently is done. It is not, as I said, a simple process, and before you can make—before you can do a good consultation on what the change might be, people really have to understand what you've got now, and I think the educational process could be the biggest chunk of this whole thing and that may take a little longer than we anticipate. That's one of the things we're looking at very carefully.

**Mr. Kinew:** Will this report also take a look at what other provinces are doing with respect to local taxation authority and, you know, the operating funding?

**Mr. Wishart:** That would be a normal practice for any consultation process. Using a consultant would be a scan of what exists in other jurisdictions. I can tell the member that, as a government, we have already looked, to some degree, at what other governments have done, but the reality is we're much later to this process of looking at change in how education's funded than many other jurisdictions, many other provinces in particular. Some did have

systems that were somewhat analogous to what we operate under now, none of them exactly the same, and they have long moved away from that. We have not done anything in regards to that in the previous—we really haven't made major changes in this process—would be funding-of-schools formula that goes back to around 2000—would be the last time there was anything major done in this area, and in terms of how education tax is generated, goes back to The Homesteads Act of 1893.

So, clearly, this is a significant change to be considering, so we want to be sure that we do a very thorough job of consultation. I think that's pretty important, but we also have to do a very thorough job making sure people understand the funding of education. There is a complex weave of local jurisdiction and provincial jurisdiction and, of course, funding from the Province and tax credits. All of this would be touched in some way, so it's a pretty complex thing to try and deal with.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, in the education process that the minister's referred to, educating the public, I guess, a bit about some of the details of what goes on in education funding, would that information about what other provincial jurisdictions do on funding be included in that public education process?

**Mr. Wishart:** I suspect some elements would be. As I said, there are only a few jurisdictions that ever actually had a system that was even close to ours. Some of the systems used in eastern Canada never included any local taxation. They would not necessarily be relevant in—you know, relevant to that side of the discussion. However, the portion that is public and the portion that—you know, where the funding comes from, would be something I think people would like to be aware of.

Really, the western provinces are the ones that, at some point, had something reasonably close. They have all moved away, some of them number of years ago, in terms of how they structured it, so where it's relevant, I suspect it would be part of the discussion. As I said, it's already a complex enough issue. I'm not sure that we want to bring in issues that would just confuse the background information unless they were relevant to the discussion.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, would the tax credits on education taxes be part of this review also?

**Mr. Wishart:** They're part of the funding of education.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, that's a yes.

**Mr. Wishart:** They're part of the funding of education, so yes.

**Mr. Kinew:** And so, what is the dollar value of the—this, that will be attached to this RFP? How much is the department setting aside to fund this process?

**Mr. Wishart:** As we've not determined the final size, scale and format of this, from our point of view, I don't think that we could really make an estimate; certainly don't have any quotes in regards to this. This is very speculative in terms of establishing a value.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, is it fair to say then that there's not a—this amount is not included in the Estimates book that's tabled for this year?

**Mr. Wishart:** That's very accurate in saying there's not a line item to outline this, yes.

**Mr. Kinew:** And is there a chance that some of this work will be carried out by departmental staff, or will all of this process be done by an outside consultant?

**Mr. Wishart:** I would expect that there will be at least an element of staff involvement, probably from a number of departments. Finance would be, certainly, one in actually supplying the background information. That's really what their role would be. And beyond that, as I said, we're still doing the groundwork in terms of establishing what we want to ask the public. It would be far to speculate, but.

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Kinew:** What advice is departmental staff providing to the minister about local taxation authority?

**Mr. Wishart:** I would have to answer the member that that is advice to the minister, and that's a privilege—that's privileged information.

**Mr. Kinew:** Once this report is completed and, you know, there's been time for, I guess, the department and Cabinet to consider it, will it be released to the public?

**Mr. Wishart:** There will, of course, be a public part of the report that is—the information—the input that we get from the public, but the advice to Cabinet would not be, as normal, would not be available to the general public.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, since last we spoke about the P3s in this committee, the government did make an announcement on the topic. So I'm wondering, with respect to that report once it's completed, will that be released to the public?

**Mr. Wishart:** And that's—actually, the answer to that would be similar to my previous answer. There'll be a portion that is available to the public, but the advice to Cabinet, as normal, would not be available to the public.

**Mr. Kinew:** Will the way that risk transfer is calculated in a P3 arrangement be part of the public portion of the report?

**Mr. Wishart:** I would have to direct the member, I think, to ask that question of Finance. As you may have appreciated from the news release, the process of getting information on P3s and doing the evaluations will involve the Department of Finance, and I think that's the place to take that question.

**Mr. Kinew:** Can the minister advise, like, which part of the P3 report will be overseen by the Department of Education, and which falls under the purview of Finance?

**Mr. Wishart:** Our portion falls more in the area of defining the needs than anywhere else.

**Mr. Kinew:** And so, in the process of designing the RFP on the P3 report, was the issue of risk transfer under consideration by the Department of Education?

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly, part of the discussion, however, the details of the analysis would be something that the member should probably take to Finance in regards to that, and that may well be part of the advice to Cabinet.

**Mr. Kinew:** And in a P3 deal, or at least for the purposes of their support, in the RFP, how are—is the government going to calculate the dollar value of risk transfer for the purpose of—purposes of costing a P3 deal?

**Mr. Wishart:** There, again, I would advise the member that that would be something that he should take up with the Department of Finance.

**Mr. Kinew:** So perhaps, then, the minister could talk about how the Department of Education will feed into this report in terms of defining needs, like what is, you know, the directive there? How will needs be defined?

**Mr. Wishart:** Well, I thank the member for the question.

Really, as I said, it's—we're—our involvement is very much around the need, and that involves a lot of things, of course, not the least of which is enrolment and projected changes to enrolment.

We also, of course, would be looking at not only the capital needs but also the maintenance needs on an ongoing basis and what—that would have an impact to us.

In terms of demographics and proposed developments in the community, every school division comes to us annually with a list of their needs, so we end up with 37 priority needs across the province, and we have to rate these things, one against the other, based an awful lot on what's happening in terms of growth in school divisions and what the existing infrastructure's condition is.

That's where we often get involved in the number of temporary classrooms or portables, as they're known, that are part of the system. Some school divisions have fairly significant numbers.

We also look at the capacity of the schools within the system. There are some divisions, of course, that have surplus capacity in their existing schools. That, of course, is the first priority to use. That's paid for, if you want to look at it that way. Whether or not it meets the needs—because needs of all, in terms of classroom space—it's something that has to be taken into account.

So it's a complex combination of needs, but very much—a lot of it is around demographics and projected growth for the student population, and that is a big factor in determining our long-term needs.

**Mr. Kinew:** So with respect to this call for proposals on this particular P3 report which was recently announced, because it already specifies which four locations are, you know, being prioritized, is it fair to say that the department has already defined the need?

**Mr. Wishart:** As I said, those needs would have been a part of the consultation process from the school divisions, so, yes, we've accepted that there is a need for these schools. We've gone through the whole due diligence process of: Are there any other alternatives? What might those alternatives be? What is the best locations? So those four that have been named so far are clearly the highest priorities at this point in time.

I don't anticipate a lot of changes. There are more further out in terms of we have other places that we think will have need for additional classroom capacity, additional schools at some point in the future, but those are much more subject to changing demographic—in terms of numbers and development, and so are much more speculative. We are focused on these four at this point in time.

**Mr. Kinew:** So what I'm trying to understand is the minister said that the Department of Education's role in this P3 report process is to define the need.

The need has already been defined. Is it fair to say, then, that this P3 report has now been handed off to the Department of Finance?

\* (16:10)

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

In our role would be very much around the infrastructure. The question around financing and the structure of the agreement very much would be—the financing, of course, would come from the Department of Finance. There's a secretariat being put together that would—for P3s, and that would involve the structure of the agreement.

So it will be a joint process where we work together, but our focus will be very much around the physical needs of the structure and whether they meet the needs as identified by our Public Schools Finance Board in conjunction with the school divisions.

**Mr. Kinew:** So who are the members of this secretariat for P3s?

**Mr. Wishart:** Now the—Manitoba Infrastructure Secretariat is the principal on that. That is part of Executive Council and the structure for that and the membership on that is something that the member should take up with Executive Council.

**Mr. Kinew:** So is this a separate secretariat, or is this additional duties being assigned to that Manitoba Infrastructure Secretariat?

**Mr. Wishart:** It isn't set up specifically for this. They are a branch within Executive Council and they do have other roles. I know that they are also a part of the process for a federal P3 initiative that involves some wastewater projects in Manitoba. So they have many roles.

**Mr. Kinew:** All right, thanks for shedding some light there.

So just a few follow ups with respect to what I understand to be part of the Education Department's role in this process. So, currently, when there's a new school being planned or being built there is local input. Will there still be that opportunity for local input into the design and planning when the P3 process is utilized in the future?

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly, there will be opportunity for local 'input'—sorry, input—once the process is better defined. But that—so far we're at the proposal stage, so some of that yet needs to be defined in greater detail before we can find the best opportunity for local input. That has been, to some degree, the past practice, and that will continue.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I think, currently, the Public Schools Finance Board funds the school and then it belongs to the division, basically. And then, under a P3 model, it would be leased back.

So who assumes the cost of the lease back under the P3 model? Will it be the division, or will it be the provincial government?

**Mr. Wishart:** Well, and I appreciate the member's question. I know he wants to find out how this will be done so that Manitobans might benefit the best, and we do as well.

But there are several different models out there, and in the call for proposals, we expect to get multiple options offered to us. There are some where the Province would pay and some where the local school division would pay, and we're looking at the relative merits of either of those—any of those options. There may be others that I'm not aware of, and we will certainly look at those as well.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, essentially, just so I'm clear on the understanding here, the answer to the question posed previously sort of hangs in the balance with what comes out of the report process; that's all.

**Mr. Wishart:** Certainly, the call for proposals will answer a number of the questions in this. Even seeing the call for proposals will help narrow down, define it a little bit. But in terms of the responses would be—that's where the greatest detail would be. There has been, I would share with the member, considerable interest, of course, from a number of different providers, and we certainly have had a lot of discussions with other jurisdictions about how this has worked for them, and learned from past experiences as well. There is not always a lot of benefits of being the last jurisdiction to do something, but one of the benefits is learning from

everyone else's misadventures, and so we have that opportunity, in this case, to learn from any other problems that have occurred in the past.

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, I thank the minister, and I thank his staff.

So we're ready to move on for consideration of Estimates.

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

Resolution 16.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$77,017,000 for Education and Training, K-12 Education and Healthy Child Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 16.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$344,027,000 for Education and Training, Education and School Tax Credits, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 16.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,378,209,000 for Education and Training, supports for schools, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 16.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$880,144,000 for Education and Training, Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Development, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 16.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,590,000 for Education and Training, Immigration and Economic Opportunities, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 16.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$82,677,000 for Education and Training, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

*Resolution agreed to.*

\* (16:20)

Resolution 16.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,215,000 for the Education and Training, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Consideration of minister's salary. The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 16.1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 16.1.

Staff may leave.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'd like to make a motion.

I move that line 16.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

**Motion presented.**

**Madam Chairperson:** The motion is in order. Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

**Mr. Kinew:** Just a comment. You know, I do recognize the work that the minister is doing, so that's why we're not necessarily moving something drastic here, but I do believe that it is fair, \$33,600 represents a 20 per cent reduction from the amount that Cabinet has guaranteed themselves after changing the balanced budget legislation here. So it would set things back to the level that they were previously at and the idea being, again, we are being asked across numerous departments by the current government to, you know, make contributions towards reducing government expenditure and, you know, this has resulted in wage freezes being pursued. I'm happy to show solidarity with workers who may have their wages frozen. However, I think that Cabinet should show the same solidarity and not increase their salary to an amount before locking in a wage freeze, so that's why I'm suggesting that we fix the minister's salary at the level that would really show, on the one hand, that he is being paid a premium for his work as a member of Cabinet and the additional workload that that entails, but also that it be at a level commensurate with a true wage freeze, as is being proposed for many workers in the public sector.

**Mr. Wishart:** Well, and I appreciate the member's comments, but as he knows, the amount was set by

the previous government in terms of what they established.

However, as the member may be aware, we have proposed an amendment—for the fiscal responsibility and taxpayer accountability act that would, in fact, end up being exactly the same amount as the member has suggested, a 20 per cent reduction in pay if we do not show progress in terms of dealing with the deficit that has been left this government by the previous one. We must make at least \$100-million progress in—from year to year, in terms of the amount of the deficit, and that is certainly a challenge and one we believe we are up to. So—but I believe that what we have proposed is a more responsible way to put forward any reductions.

**Madam Chairperson:** Is the committee ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Chairperson:** Shall the motion pass?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Voice Vote**

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

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

**Recorded Vote**

**Mr. Kinew:** I'd like to request a 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 4:26 p.m.*

**IN SESSION**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Monday, May 15, 2017**

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