

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
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KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
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MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
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PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
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YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 13, 2018

*The House met at 10 a.m.***ORDERS OF THE DAY***(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS***(Continued)***COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY****(Concurrent Sections)***(Continued)***INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Madam Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Infrastructure. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to ask the minister about the Land Value Appraisal Commission. It's disappeared as a line in the minister's Estimates book. I'd like to know where it is now.

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure):** Well, thank you very much, and good morning, committee. Great to be here: sun's shining in, can't imagine any place I'd rather be than sitting here with the member for Elmwood, dealing with the important matters of state.

**An Honourable Member:** Me too.

**Mr. Schuler:** Yes, and the member for Elmwood indicates there is no place he would either rather be, and I know the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) is excited to be here too. You can just see it, how we're all just happy to be here.

Anyway, committee, thank you for coming, and I also want to welcome two individuals that are going to be here for today helping with the departmental Estimates. We have Larry Halayko, spelt, h-y-l-a-n-k-o, who's the executive director of Construction and Maintenance; and then we have Lynn Cowley, who is director of finance. She's here as well.

Welcome, and I know they are also very excited to be here this morning in this beautiful room.

The member asked a question about the Land Value Appraisal Commission. If he would go to page 88 of the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, he would see that on the top of the page of 88, it says (h) Boards and Commissions, and if he goes down, he will see there's a footnote.

And that is that land appraisal commission, Motor Transport, Highway Traffic boards as well as Licence Suspension Appeal Board, medical review committee, have been amalgamated under that one subcategory.

**Mr. Maloway:** A number of the engineering divisions look like they've also been combined. And I believe that's Materials Engineering, transportation and Traffic Engineering. Do I have that right?

**Mr. Schuler:** Yes. If the member would go to page 89, (e), he would see that they've been amalgamated under that section.

**Mr. Maloway:** In terms of the line, Highway Engineering, the numbers don't line up, so perhaps the minister can tell us: What lines from last year were added together to make the line, Highway Engineering?

**Mr. Schuler:** Madam Speaker, I would like to correct the record, if I may, and that Larry Halayko is spelled H-a-l-a-y-k-o, if Hansard would please disregard the other spelling. It's Larry Halayko.

Further to the member's question, there was a realignment of the departments. Transport policy and legislative review went into (c) Corporate Information Management.

**Mr. Maloway:** Highway's transportation and water control programs used to have an expenditure called other jurisdictions, Madam Chair, and it provided specialized services to other departments in government and to rural municipalities on a cost-recovery basis. It was just over \$1.5 million last year and no longer appears in the budget. Have these services been eliminated?

\* (10:10)

**Mr. Schuler:** I would like to inform the member for Elmwood that that has now been moved into section (e), of page 89, Highway Engineering.

**Mr. Maloway:** Boards and Commissions have been removed as a line, and I'm assuming that's through the minister's elimination of his boards. Is that correct?

**Mr. Schuler:** If the member would look at page 88—I don't know if he has his books with him. If not, I'm sure the member for Assiniboia has about eight of them; he could lend him one of his. *[interjection]* He'll be back. He could probably just table one of the—*[interjection]*—Yes, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) would then have to return it back to the library. I had—took a whole cartful of stuff back to the library this morning.

On page 88, if he would look at item (h) Boards and Commissions, that's where it's been moved to. It's listed there, though.

**Mr. Maloway:** It is just back to the previous question. He had indicated that the—I just want to know what appropriation that was in. He said it was section (e) of page—on page 89, Highway Engineering. And I just want to know what appropriation is he referring to.

**Mr. Schuler:** If the member would look at page 89, (e), planning and design of property services, Materials Engineering, Traffic, Engineering is 15.2(e); that's where he would find that. And, on page 87, Transportation Policy, in Legislative Review, is in 15.1.(c).

**Mr. Maloway:** I'd like to ask the minister: What boards and commissions does this minister retain if this bill goes through?

\* (10:20)

**Mr. Schuler:** Once the opposition passes that wonderful and glorious bill, the boards that are going to be left are the land appraisal commission, Licence Suspension Appeal Board and the Medical Review Committee.

**Mr. Maloway:** Madam Chair, the maintenance and preservation of provincial highways has declined by over \$5 million. Question is, why?

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, as the member will know, we've spoken about being not just smart shoppers but smarter shoppers. So we're looking at a lot of cutting-edge technology, innovation, working with our partners. And we believe that there are ways in which we can find efficiencies.

Keeping in mind, I would like to point out to the member, after 17 dark, polluting, bad, bad years for

the environment, we know that the member for Elmwood just didn't—him—he and his government did not believe in protecting the environment.

And one of the things that I'm very, very supportive is, is protecting our fresh water. We sustain ourselves with clean, fresh water. And we also appreciate the beautiful and fresh, clean air that we breathe in. And, frankly, we make our living—

**An Honourable Member:** Madman Speaker, point of order.

**Mr. Schuler:** —off of the ground that we grow our crops in, and that is very—

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable—order.

#### Point of Order

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** The answers should be proportionate and regarding the question of the questioner. The—talking about things that happened decades ago, or the environment or things, do not have anything to do with spending. They do not have anything to do with Estimates.

When the committee agrees to do a global—they're not—if you look at the policy and procedure manual in Canada and how the practice is done across Canada in the committee, a reasonable question deserves a reasonable answer without condescension, tone or any of the other stuff that seems to be endemic in the Manitoba political culture.

So I wonder if the minister can simply answer the question for all our sakes.

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable minister, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Schuler:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I mean, clearly this is not a point of order. This is—and we understand that individuals get elected to this Legislature and don't know the rules and don't—perhaps don't even respect the rules, don't understand how the rules work. I was answering the question for the member for Elmwood.

Normally, what we do at committee is we give the courtesy to members to take their fully allotted time to ask the question. The member for Assiniboia was given that courtesy yesterday. He asked questions that were long trips off a short pier that seemed to go nowhere. And we listened to him. And

the answers—I have a very clear, definitive answer I want to give the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), explaining why it is that there's a reduction, why we have to be cognizant of our environment and, yes, we run our equipment with fuel in it. So, if the members would allow the answer to be given, even new members from—the new member from Assiniboine could actually learn something. I think he might find it advantageous. There's no point of order.

**Madam Chairperson:** I feel I have sufficient information to rule on this point of order.

According to page 510 of O'Brien and Bosc, members may not insist on an answer, and a minister's refusal to answer a question may not be questioned or treated as the subject of a point of order or question of privilege. I would also note that the Chair is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions. Therefore, I must rule that the member does not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair.

And, again, what we want to do is ensure that as we move forward as a province, that we do things efficiently. We see that the member for Assiniboia's (Mr. Fletcher) former friends, in fact, even the member for Elmwood's former friends in Ottawa are now going to be bringing in a carbon tax, and we are trying to protect Manitobans with pre-empting it, so we don't go to an extreme of \$50, \$80, \$100 per carbon ton but cap it at \$25.

So we want to make sure that the equipment we're running is efficient. We know that our new equipment is faster; it can do more with the same time and investment. So there are savings there. And we want to be cognizant of the fact that we do burn fuel in these vehicles. We want to ensure that we're always protecting the environment. Perhaps at some point in time we could start looking at electric vehicles. That's maybe a little bit further out. The technology hasn't quite caught up to this kind of equipment, but it's coming. And we want to ensure that our department, in what we do, we do it the most efficiently and that we do it the best for the environment. And those savings, Madam Speaker, are then passed on to the taxpayer. And I'm sure the member for Elmwood would be ecstatic about that, that after 17 years of the mismanagement of the

environment file, we are back on track on being the most clean and green province in the nation.

**Mr. Maloway:** Before I turn over questioning to the member for Assiniboia, I just want to point out that in the first session of the Estimates, two days ago, the minister was asked by myself, by the member for Assiniboia, many times about the date of the Treasury Board meeting and the Cabinet meetings that approved the sole-source contract that we were discussing that day. And that question could've been answered in just a couple of words, and yet the minister raged on and on for his full time allotment on each and every question, deliberately not answering the question that he was directly being asked and talking about things that were—had nothing to do with the Manitoba Legislature even.

So I invite the member for Assiniboia to ask some questions.

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, Madam Speaker, we, over the last several days, have asked the member for Elmwood if he would, in very short words—he wouldn't have to run out the clock, wouldn't have to use up his whole time allotted him to ask a question—if, in that time frame, he would be prepared to apologize to one member of the Legislature who, the member for Elmwood attacked his wife, falsely attacked her, wrongly attacked her for being related to somebody else in the Chamber. He was wrong. He should apologize for that. We gave him that opportunity.

We also gave him the opportunity to apologize to the family of another member for the kind of attacks that he made on the fact that someone's daughter wants to enter the workforce. She wants to participate in the economy. She was doing so before the member was even appointed to any position here in the Legislature. Our families, our children and, yes, our daughters are allowed to go and have jobs in the economy. And, Madam Speaker, that was untoward, it was uncalled for, that the member for Elmwood would attack a member's wife, falsely accusing her of being related, and somehow it was untoward what was going on, and then going after someone's daughter.

And you have to wonder why the member for Elmwood would even go down that path, why he didn't check his facts, why he didn't make sure and ensure that what he was saying was accurate, why he didn't do any of that. And then, when he was called

out for having put misinformation on the record, for having gotten it wrong, for having gone outside of the realm of what we normally do in this Legislature, where we go after each other—yes, we call each other to task, yes we call each other short when we feel something isn't right. But we don't involve families, and we don't 'invive'—involve wives and daughters as collateral damage when we're dealing with issues in this Chamber.

So the question then really should be, why does the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) not avail himself of his time and just apologize? One word, that's all he would have to say is—actually, two: I apologize. That's all he would have to say. And he should. And he should apologize to the member of this Legislature whose wife he wrongly attacked, and the member whose daughter he brought into this. And that was untoward. And he shouldn't have done that.

Why doesn't the member for Elmwood apologize and take 30 seconds and do so?

**Mr. Fletcher:** The process that we are in is called Estimates. It's the Estimates of government expenditure and how those expenditures take place. Anything outside of that is outside the administrative authority of government and should not be part of the discussion in the Chamber at committee. And I will be happy to provide the appropriate references in the appropriate journals from across the Commonwealth.

The member—the minister—and again, it's the sole-source contracting. Conservatives believe in competition. We believe in transparency. We believe in Aboriginal involvement. We believe in fairness. And we believe in value for money for taxpayers' dollars. And, over time, the centuries have demonstrated that, when there is competition, that is in the best interests of the taxpayer. And when there is not competition, that is not in the interest of taxpayers in the context of infrastructure projects. It's just that simple.

Now the minister has said that he won't apologize for what could be a mistake, and he won't make a commitment that it won't happen again.

Well, I'd like to go to page 1. So the minister's comments are—and by the way, if you can let me know when there's, like, 30 seconds left, Madam Speaker—this is what the minister said just a few days ago: Every decision—Cabinet. There's a Treasury Board and there's a PMP and there's

a Regulatory Accountability Committee—the Regulatory Accountability Committee. So they are to ensure that the regulations for procurements are followed.

There is no way the sole source contract from—that was presented could have successfully gone through that regulatory assessment committee because sole-source contracting almost by definition doesn't meet the criteria of that—I'm ending my sentence with a preposition. The minister goes on to say, so decisions are government decisions. They're made after a lot of consideration, a lot of discussion, and they're made through a process. The government decision—and the government makes the decision and the government defends the decision. The members will know that—blah, blah, blah, blah.

So the member—

**An Honourable Member:** I said blah, blah, blah, blah, blah?

**Mr. Fletcher:** —the blah, blah, blah is not part of the Hansard, it's just, but one could be left with the impression that it was. So the government, on one hand, is saying they make the decision and then, on the other, they say it's the department. The minister—and we'll get to this in the second question—throws the department under the bus, doesn't take responsibility. He says, oh, it's all done over there.

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

**Mr. Schuler:** This morning the committee walked in, and we walked into this absolutely glorious room, sunshine streaming in all the windows, and we greeted each other and talked about what a beautiful day it was and how wonderful it was to be here at committee.

And you know what, I understand that for some people they go through life always being negative. So, you know what, the member—I'm going to pull out anything positive I can out of his question—and what the member is asking for is, in this Estimates process would we talk about some of the positive things that are coming out of this department.

I would like to point out that we had the opportunity to go up to Lac du Bonnet and the Winnipeg River bridge. This is a bridge that has been 'deteriating' for many years. The NDP, the member for Elmwood and his government, decided that what they were going to do—that they were going to deal with a bridge that was declining in safety,

that was 'deteriating'—what they decided to do was take a two-lane bridge and reduce it down to one lane. That was their idea of repair and maintenance.

Now the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) who, you know, occasionally travels from his dacha on the riverbanks of Elmwood and occasionally travels to Transcona, usually when he's running for federal office, and has all his Frisbees paid for by the taxpayer and throws them out at parades. He does occasionally get out, but he should get out of the Perimeter, and what he should do is go to Lac du Bonnet and he should see what sorry state—he personally and his government for 17 years—allowed that bridge to 'deteriate' to, and we announced a magnificent upgrade of that bridge.

\* (10:40)

I would point out to the member, unlike him and his black helicopter, black ops that he seems to run everywhere in the province, we drove out there on that beautiful, magnificent day, stood out there on the banks of the river and announced the retrofit. And it is necessary. When that bridge is complete, it will be back to two lanes; it will be slightly wider; it will be a magnificent bridge.

Unfortunately, I have to tell members of this committee and people from Lac du Bonnet that for three weeks, probably in fall when the bulk of the heavy traffic is complete, that we'll have to close it for three weeks. And, for instance, it will allow for generations—in fact, we have the latest generation of Currys in the back of the room. I see that she has joined us. And we want, for generations to come that—it's her first birthday, I'd like to point out, the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry), his daughter, and that bridge will be there for when she gets her licence.

And I would point out the member for Kildonan, it's going to come faster than he thinks when she'll want the keys. And she'll probably be driving across that bridge, and she will know that after 17 dark, dark days of neglect of the member of Elmwood and his NDP government, that we are going to rehabilitate that bridge, and people will be driving across it not one lane at a time—no. It'll be a proper two-lane bridge where traffic can cross back and forth.

Again, unfortunately, we're going to have to close it for three weeks just because of construction. We'll try and do that in fall when traffic is down.

And I'd like to point out there's the Christmas bridge in Portage la Prairie. And it is so termed, Madam Speaker—I think the legal term is the—it's on the Portage bypass, but we refer to it as the Christmas bridge. And the reason why we do that is because, under the NDP, a truck happened to run into that bridge, and it looked like it was missing a tooth. About a year and a half ago, it was struck a second time by a truck, and we decided to do the right thing, rather than just keep removing teeth out of the bridge. We are doing a new design study; we're going to raise the bridge; we're going to put in a new structure.

And, when people in Portage la Prairie drive by, they don't have to drive by all kinds of barricades, because the NDP—it was the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and his government—did repair by barricade. Rather than put any money in it, they just bought some barricades, threw them on, and traffic had to go to one lane.

We are doing a lot of positive things. And I know the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) is just ecstatic to hear the good news coming out of this budget. I hope he's going to vote for it.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Madam Chair, another example of asking a specific question and getting gobbledygook back.

Yesterday—or the other day, the minister said the following: Governments, being Cabinet, decide policy. Goes on to say, whether it goes to MERX or single source, it's the civil servants, non-partisan civil servants, that do the legwork, whether it's on MERX—they collect all the bids, pick up the right bid and recommend it to government.

To be very clear, the Cabinet does not open up bids and decide which bids are right or [*inaudible*]-and it does it—it's done by professionals in the department. What—Cabinet role is to set policy.

And, then, okay, well, the minister goes on: What government can do is say yes or no, and then it goes back.

Why didn't the minister say no to a sole-source procurement contract? Why didn't he say no? He knows sole-source contracting is against the trade agreements, the New West Partnership Agreement, against Conservative principles. He should have said no. He says right here that's all he—he doesn't know about all the other stuff. Should have said no. He didn't say no—said yes to a sole-source contract.

Why did he say yes? That's what he says; he says yes to a sole-source contract.

Well, the—so, if the department said, you know what, I would like you to jump off a cliff, I don't think the minister would do that. But sole-source contracting for a Conservative is the metaphoric equivalent of jumping off a cliff: no transparency, no accountability, no competition, against free trade. And they won't even just take the proper way out and say that it was a mistake and a promise that the procedures of the Province of Manitoba, as laid out in their own procedure manual, will be followed.

And will the minister simply—simply—tell us why he said yes to a sole-source contract? There is nothing anywhere that allows for that in this situation, nothing.

**Mr. Schuler:** I just want to take this opportunity to welcome Sophia and Ellen Curry to the committee today, and—S-o-p-h-i-a and E-l-l-e-n, just the spellings for Hansard.

And I want Sophia to know that, unlike negative members of committee, we are going to say yes, and we are going to say yes to building a dynamic and wonderful Manitoba. And, unlike the neglect that we saw under the NDP for 17 years, neglect of our roads, neglect of our environment, which, the more they proclaimed environmental policy, the worse things got for the environment. And we had some of the worst wait times. In fact, not just were we 10th, but we were always getting further and further behind nine. And we want Sophia to know that we are saying yes to building a strong and healthy economy here in Manitoba.

I'd like to point out to negative members of this committee, those that feel that everything is negative, that we have brought over \$1 billion in less than two years of private investment that—endangered species under the last 17 years of the NDP, where the private investment crane had all but disappeared—we are now bringing amazing investment into Manitoba. Between Roquette and Simplot and HyLife—and the list goes on. We have the software developer which, once they get established here, that's 100 fantastic jobs for the new, upcoming generation of—by and large, they'll either be engineers or they will be computer science or just all the way around incredibly bright young people. So we are going to have, in all sectors of our economy, we are going to have individuals getting jobs. *[interjection]*

And, Madam Chair, maybe we should point out to Sophia that she does not have a voice at this table,

but she is so terribly cute. And we're just so pleased to have the next—*[interjection]*—she—the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) says is that he actually can understand her, and that's good. That's good; we're pleased that the member for Elmwood is as pleased to have Sophia here today, as well.

I would like to point out to the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) that probably jumping off of cliffs, whether it's cliff diving, hand gliding, base jumping or 'bundee' jumping, is not really my thing. I know he suggested that maybe I take some of those up, and I would suggest to him that I won't. I won't—I won't take hand gliding up. It's not on my bucket list. But I thank him for that encouragement that I go and I do these kinds of activities. That's probably more down Sophia's kind of a thing. She'll probably engage in those kinds of things; it's not something that I would do.

\* (10:50)

But I would point out to the member for Assiniboia, we are doing some amazing investments in infrastructure in the province, and that he should start focusing on the positive things. I would like to point out to him, for instance, there is Freedom Road. For 17 dark years, we heard the NDP commit and promise; and promise and commit; and commit and promise; and talk, talk, talk, talk, talk; and they slayed all kinds of trees out of the Amazon forest, putting out press releases on all these projects, including Freedom Road; and accomplished nothing—nothing—Madam Chair. Nothing was ever accomplished on Freedom Road in 17 dark, dark years of the NDP.

In 22 months of our government, phase 1 is complete, phase 2 is under construction, and we hope that, all things being equal, that by this fall, Freedom Road will be complete—something that 17 years of the member for Elmwood and his NDP party could never get accomplished.

**Mr. Fletcher:** The minister has managed, again, to not answer the questions on Estimates. This is a serious committee dealing with serious issues. The fact that I'm simply asking a question on sole-source procurement of \$11 million that went out against the policies and procedures of the department, at the outrage of the construction industry in Manitoba, to the detriment of our interprovincial trade agreements is an absolutely important decision.

I've offered the minister the—ways out—off-ramps to apologize, make it a mistake, make a commitment—I'd be happy with just a commitment that it



would never—sole-source contracting won't happen again, or that the government just follow their own policies, follow the principles of Conservatism.

I will ask, again, if we can—the minister said that contracts go through the regulatory accountability committee, like—or administrative committee. I'd like the minister to demonstrate that; tell us who's on that committee; give us some evidence that some due diligence was done on the sole-source contracting; tell us when the date was it. Maybe it pre-dated the minister. Maybe it—I don't know—there could be a plethora of reasons, but we haven't heard anything but the minister providing condescending remarks to the people who are asking questions, condescending remarks to the member from Elmwood, to myself, to the process.

Madam Chair, Estimates, the numbers—that's all that we're dealing with, and how money is spent. Sole source contracting is not in the interests of the Manitoba taxpayer, Manitoba workers. If it happened in the past, that's bad.

But let's not have this government use the last government as the standard. We can do better, and by admitting that this government made a mistake, perhaps with the culture that they inherited from the previous government in the department or wherever, it was a mistake. The positive thing is to say it was a mistake; it won't happen again. Or the minister could take responsibility for a decision, which, apparently, he didn't make. Or the minister can do what he did the other day and throw the department and the deputy minister under the bus, saying it was all their fault, and the minister could have just said no to a sole-source on common sense.

But we know that it wasn't the minister. This decision was made somewhere else. And how are we going to ever get to accountability when we get these ridiculous, hogwash answers from the minister on a very serious issue?

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

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, Madam Speaker, we've heard it over and over again, and I'm not too sure if the one term that the member's using is the most appropriate today. I would suggest that maybe he leave that term for another time in light of circumstances that have happened in other jurisdictions. Maybe he would like to just refrain from using that. I don't think that is appropriate, especially in light of the fact that today is going to be a very painful and sad time for

individuals saying goodbye to loved ones. So I don't know if I would use that one term.

I do, however, want to suggest—

**An Honourable Member:** Madam Chair, on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Madam Chairperson:** The honourable member from Assiniboia, on a point of order.

**Mr. Fletcher:** I'm sorry, I can't hear the minister. There's a fan or something going on back here. Oh, never mind, it's fixed. Sorry, didn't see that.

**Madam Chairperson:** That is technically not a point of order, but we are happy to address the issue.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Schuler:** I would like to say to committee, Estimates is a good opportunity. In fact, member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) took the opportunity this morning to ask a whole series of technical questions where appropriations had been moved to and why they were moved there and the like. And those are questions that are very technical for a critic to find out what's happening within the department. The other thing that members could ask is positive questions or technical questions or questions about the Estimates, or they can be negative. I mean, negativity, in some circles, really does have its place. They—some people love to live in negative places or always view everything as being half empty and dark and dreary, and I don't live there. I just don't live there. I want to view this as a very much a positive, good-news story.

And I would like to point out to committee, and I know the member for Elmwood was just going to ask the question and then he had to hand the series over to the—to his colleague, his compadre, the member for Assiniboine, but I know the member for Elmwood was just going to ask about the Norway House inspection station. And that's something that came out of this budget, and how did that happen, and how did it come about? And I want to thank Chief Ron Evans, who's now former chief, who—of Norway House, who did just an amazing job on that. In fact, evidently he wasn't getting much uptake from the dark days, again, the kind of dark-and-gloom days of the NDP, and he came and he saw me as minister of Crowns, and he approached me on this idea, and I know he approached other ministers, and we got on board and absolutely helped in whatever way possible for Norway House to have an

inspection station to be able to stem the kind of drugs and contraband items coming into his community. We know that human trafficking is also a concern, and that was part of it.

\* (11:00)

And I actually want to thank, again, the department of Manitoba Infrastructure. I know there were other departments involved as well: Indigenous Relations, the Minister responsible and—*[interjection]* Okay. So I'd like to thank the Minister responsible for Indigenous Relations, Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Cullen). There were a lot of individuals involved in getting that inspection station up and running.

We had the opportunity to go up there and view it and be there for the grand opening. We were part of the feast. I want to point out to members that these are the positive things that come out of Estimates. What I would suggest to members, when they're asking questions, is rather than just dwell in darkness and negativity, that they start talking about all the positive and great things that are coming out of the department.

And look forward to spending at least another hour and a half, and probably next week a whole bunch of hours, talking about all the good things and the positive things that are coming out of the Department of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Fletcher:** As an engineer, I look at the glass, and I say it's 50 per cent capacity. Or—it's not half-empty; it's not half-full. But it may have potential and the objective of the glass is to add water.

A rational approach is a good approach to life. Minister talks about negativity, but the only thing that's negative here today is the refusal of the minister to answer the questions that are specific on Estimates, specific on his responsibility as minister and the collective responsibility of government.

I've asked the minister if he would table to this committee, or get back to me on a variety of things, including the regulatory—the RAP—or RAC, including the timelines for the decision making. If the minister has any plausible excuse, reason, loophole to allow for that sole-source procurement, present it, because there is none. But I challenge the minister to do that. Just present it to us. What is the loophole?

Madam Chair, the minister may also want to search in his soul about why—go to fundamental

principles of why we are Conservatives: transparency, accountability, open markets, competition, allowing people to reach their full potential. All of this is done, and it—or is believed by Conservatives, and it's undermined when commitments are not fulfilled—and we haven't even got into the—like, I haven't gotten into the Infrastructure budget.

Because that—but I do know this. We all know this. Sole-source contracting can only lead to bad outcomes. The minister has not—has not—answered any of the questions over the last many days. People can read in Hansard. It seems to be some sort of triumphant of personal attacks between the minister, one of the government MLAs, and the member from Elmwood. Like, that is very unfortunate.

The minister has not demonstrated ministerial responsibility. He throws the—he's saying that the department is responsible for the sole-source contract, and they could have said no, but the government said yes. And that is not responsibility.

Madam Chair, I hope the minister is more responsible with the material that I gave him yesterday, and I hope he will return it to the library when he's done, because I don't want to be stuck with his late fees the way that taxpayers have been stuck with higher—

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

**Mr. Schuler:** I forgot to mention that we did actually travel up to Norway House, and it was just a fantastic event where the inspection station was—the ribbon cutting, and they did a blessing on it. And I know there were other individuals, or, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) would describe it, as a junket—I'm getting there.

And—now, the member for Flin Flon refers to anybody travelling anywhere as a junket. I guess he would include the member for Elmwood's (Mr. Maloway) junkets when he occasionally leaves his dacha on the banks of the Red River and occasionally on—well, once at least—travels outside of the city.

But we were up there, and it was just a magnificent event. It was really good to touch base and have a look around the community and hear the aspirations of where the community wants to go and how they are moving their community forward.

I would like to point out to the committee that they put on a magnificent feast. The food was just amazing. And for the first time in my life, I actually

got to taste a real rabbit stew, and I got myself a bowlful, and I had my first spoonful, and then the member for the Interlake grabbed the bowl from me and ate it up. And that—I never did get to finish my bowl of rabbit stew. And it was just really great to be up there and to connect, and we really appreciate the kind of leadership that is shown.

And there is a positive story. There is something, perhaps, that the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) would like to read a little bit more about and familiarize himself with the positivity of the kinds of things that are going on across our province, not just the negativity that he would like to, you know, continue to be involved in.

I do also want to point out to committee that if we go to Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, and I know the member for Elmwood's (Mr. Maloway) flipping through the pages, so I want to direct him to page 106. Member for Assiniboia can look at it in his multiple books that he took out of the Legislative Library, and we want to ensure that he takes them back so he doesn't have to pay all the overdue dues—wouldn't want him to have to pay that.

But, on page 106, it's Emergency Measures Organization. And the objectives of the EMO is—and it's in here, but I'll just read it for him—is "responsible for overseeing and coordinating all aspects of emergency preparedness in the province and to manage, coordinate and direct the response of all government departments to a major emergency or disaster, established by The Emergency Measures Act. Manitoba EMO also provides disaster assistance to Manitobans impacted by disasters through the Disaster Financial Assistance . . . program."

\* (11:10)

And I would like to thank acting Assistant Deputy Minister Jeremy Angus, who happens to be here. We thank him for the work that he does in that department. It is very important. And, if there's one thing that I've appreciated very much and that was from Assistant Deputy Minister Angus's leadership, we got to have a wonderful briefing on the infrastructure that's been put in place to protect Manitoba from disasters that we have seen over, really, hundreds and hundreds of years, and how we protect this province. It is absolutely magnificent, and it's something that any engineer worth his salt would want to talk about at committee, would want to get into, because this would be just—it's like

Christmastime for engineers, about how well this is laid out and how well it's built and how well it's run.

And, to the engineers within the department and those that are responsible and tasked for EMO, they do just a great job and we are so pleased. And I'm sure the member for Assiniboia might want to avail himself of some of the answers and some of the technical things that go on. I'm sure he would be very much appreciative of it and, of course, the channel leading from Lake Manitoba is part of that. And I look forward to the member for Assiniboine asking those kinds of Estimates-positive kinds of questions.

We'll wait for his next question.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** I appreciate the chance to ask a few questions.

Has the department done an evaluation of the possible, presumably negative, impacts on infrastructure in Manitoba if one of the diversion projects, water diversion projects on the books in North Dakota goes ahead?

If people are unfamiliar with this, very briefly, there was an environmental assessment done. It's about 10 years old. It was done by the American side of the equation. I actually want to give some props to the person who got the environmental assessment online. It is one of our legislative interns, Angela Reeves, who contacted the department down there and said, hey, we can't find this, and they put it up online as a result. So the department can check it out.

There are over two dozen foreign invasive species identified in that document as being in the waters of the Missouri River. Some of them could potentially end up here, if those projects go ahead, if there isn't proper treatment, if the treatment system fails at any point. So just wondering is the department looking at this? Have they had any conversations with their Sustainable Development colleagues who might be the lead on that response for the government?

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, I'd like to point out to the member that, as he would know, having been part of the previous NDP government, that Sustainable Development would be the lead on this particular issue. I would point out that Manitoba Infrastructure does take an active role in the Red River basin joint commission. We work closely with them, but, again, it is Sustainable Development that would be the lead on this one. And I would point out to the member that as soon as the critic for Education allows Education to rise, then Sustainable Development will

be in the Chamber for their Estimates, and that would be a really good opportunity for the member, then, to ask questions of Sustainable Development. That should be coming imminently.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Okay. Thanks for that. Perhaps a similar answer coming to my next question, but I'll try anyway.

Does the department have any funds budgeted this year to install charging stations for electric vehicles alongside any highway restoration or construction projects that it will be undertaking this year?

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, as the member knows, that our government has put forward a green action plan. Finally, the Province of Manitoba has a real plan, not like in the last 17 years, where the more talk the NDP did on the environment, the worse things got.

And the member asking the question, the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), will have been part of that, and will know that Manitoba consistently underperformed when it came to the environment under his leadership. It seemed to be that it was actually better if New Democrats didn't talk about the environment, because then things wouldn't decline as badly as they did under the NDP.

Our government has put forward a green plan. Now, unfortunately, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) wants to stall legislation that involves road safety, and the member for Wolseley wants to stall legislation that deals with the environment, which is the strangest thing possible because you would think that the critic for Manitoba Infrastructure would be supportive of legislation that brings in road safety, and you'd think that the member for Wolseley, who is a self-proclaimed environmentalist, would be interested in putting forward and supporting legislation that protects the environment and helps us meet our targets.

Instead, neither critic does what they should be doing. So I would suggest to the member the best thing he could do is walk into caucus—if they still allow him—he should walk into caucus, put aside his unity pledge and all those kinds of things, and focus on the duty at hand. And he should convince his caucus—good luck—he should convince his caucus that they should pass the environment plan so we can get going on the things that Manitobans want and the things that we need for our environment.

Maybe he should start showing some leadership and get his caucus on board, instead of stalling

legislation that deal with road safety, instead of stalling legislation that are going to help our environment. Instead, Madam Speaker, they are stalling these things. He should convince his caucus to support those pieces of legislation so we can move on.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** That's one of the lengthier versions of no, I think, I've heard in my career.

I read with some passing interest the dialogue—and I want to thank my honourable colleague from Elmwood for starting that—that took place yesterday during Estimates trying to unravel and unpack the various movements of money from this department to a green fund and then back to the department.

Now, what I read in Hansard, maybe let's just start with this, to confirm that we're all on the same page, in Hansard yesterday, the minister indicated that \$32,000,595 had been transferred out of his department to go into the new green fund. Is that—let's just start with that, is that the accurate number?

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, as the member will know, or should know, every department in government should be part of a green plan. And one of the things that we have learned is that if governments use political slogans or platitudes and talk about things but don't actually have real direction, if they don't have the political muscle behind something, they fail. And we've seen that 17 years of failures under the NDP, in that it was talk—whether it was the Freedom Road or the environment, and there were a whole slew of other examples; I won't get into them all.

So what we have decided as government is that we want to identify where it is that we can help improve our environment, and I'd like to point out to committee members: Let's be very clear. Although we have truly some of the most beautiful, pristine, clean water, we want to keep it that way. I would suggest to you if you travelled around the world, you would find that every one of those countries, every country, started off with pristine and clean and beautiful water, and they weren't vigilant. And, if members have travelled—I was in Cambodia with my daughter, and we crossed a river, and we were just appalled. It was clear that what was being flushed was coming right out in the middle of the river. And that is an absolute disregard of the environment. It was so nauseating you could barely—you had to hold your breath, then hurry and scurry across the bridge to get to the other side, because it was just that bad.

We want to ensure that we leave a Manitoba better than when we got it. And, unfortunately, that's not something that occurred under the NDP in the last 17 years. That is our goal, and every department has to participate. Every department has to be part of that. And our Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) is a real champion of the environment. And we have to protect our water, we have to protect our air and we have to protect our soil to make sure that we can continue to feed ourselves, have fresh water and have clean air.

And even within the Department of Manitoba Infrastructure, we have to shoulder our share of the responsibility. We do so willingly. Wherever we can, we are going to look at green initiatives. I'd like to point out to members, we are—we have put the department under review and we are challenging how we do things.

And I'll share with the member. For instance, if we need to have a vehicle at a construction site observing some work being done, supervising or whatever they might be doing, does that have to be an F150 or another big truck, or could that be a hybrid, or could that even be an electric vehicle? If it's not pulling a trailer, if it's not involved in the construction part of it, can the vehicle be there and be environmentally friendly at the same time? Because we understand our department needs to have oversight. That's one of the duties that we do. We ensure that the public is being protected for the dollars it expends. But there are real, meaningful things that every department can do.

Now, I would also point out to members opposite, that takes courage. Did the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) have that courage? Nyet. No. Non. Absolutely not. He did not have the courage. Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), who runs around talking about how green he is, were any of those conversations ever part of our department when he was in government? No, because talk is cheap. And that's what the member for Wolseley wanted to do, was talk.

We are going to act, and every one of our departments has been tasked on how we can do things more efficiently and how we can do it in such a sustainable way to help protect the environment.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So the minister doesn't know, is basically what I'm taking from that answer, either that or he's refusing to answer the question, which is bizarre because yesterday he had a fairly precise answer. It is a perfectly legitimate question, and,

Madam Chair, having sat in your chair for many a year, and lost many an hour of my life to the Estimates process, there is a—there's an element of ragging the puck, if you will, when ministers are trying to chew up the clock.

At the end of the day, the minister is obligated to provide an answer. The staff have absolute capacity to provide him with the answer. They may have acted on his instructions or his government's instructions to do something that he's now trying to cover up. I do not blame the staff for this at all. But that answer's ludicrous, and he should be embarrassed to stoop to that level when yesterday he had an answer. I'm merely trying to establish that what he said yesterday was accurate, because I understand that the staff were not able to listen on the microphones, and they came over here a little late.

A very simple question, and the reason I ask it is that, on page 86 of the budget and on page—where is it—12, I think, of his departmental book, it indicates that the appropriation from his department to the green fund was not \$32,000,595, it's \$30,616,000. So has the minister lost 1 and a half million dollars since yesterday? I mean, let's at least just get a straight answer: How much money from his department has gone into the green fund?

\* (11:30)

Let's start there, and then we can dig through the rest of it afterwards. I would invite the minister to take the partisan aspect out of this. This is simply exploration, trying to confirm that my understanding of his government's department's Estimates are accurate. If he chooses to embarrass himself again, I can't prevent that, but I am not here to shame or show up anybody. I'm merely trying to understand why these numbers don't seem to add up and to learn more about what is actually going on. Thank you.

**Mr. Schuler:** I'd point out to the member opposite, and he's been at this for a while, as well, is that there is a time limit to which we're allowed to answer, and I do believe, however, it's important to give an answer so that the committee understands where government is coming from. So he got that, which is more than I got from many of his ministers when I was a critic. And I would like to point out to committee that, yes, department of Manitoba Infrastructure does transfer money to the green fund, and then has access to funds out of the green fund to fund green initiatives. He's absolutely correct there, and, again, that gets back to the initial discussion we

had, and that is, that every department is tasked to be responsible and to show some responsibility for the environment. And that we do, and that we have done, and I gave him some examples. Now, clearly, he doesn't want to hear positive news like other members before him asking questions. Every time you talk about something positive, then it's, like, oh, he doesn't know, or oh, he doesn't this, and then right away they get negative.

We're actually giving a very fulsome answer on where we are going as a government. We—the member should be clapping and cheering. He should be just absolutely ecstatic that finally we have a government in Manitoba that not just is speaking about the environment but is actually doing something about it.

So, yes, there is money being transferred out of the budget into the green fund, and then the department can withdraw funds out of the green fund for green initiatives within the department.

And, Madam Speaker, I would point out to members opposite, they should be very pleased that we have a government in Manitoba that has been on the forefront of the green discussion, that has been on the forefront of the debate on how we should be proceeding with green initiatives, and I don't know why the member is always so negative.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I thank the minister for pointing out what is clear in the budget documents: that money from his department is going into the green fund and then coming back to his department; that wasn't what I've been asking, as I think he knows. What I'm wondering is how much money is involved, because we have two different answers to that. So which one is it? Is it \$32,595,000 for this year, or is it \$30,616,000 for this year?

**Mr. Schuler:** Yes, and I'd like to point out to members of the committee, I mean, one of the things that we have done as a government is put forward legislation and I would suggest to the member opposite that he take time when he's in Estimates with Sustainable Development and has the opportunity, to ask questions about where we're going with that legislation. Perhaps he can convince the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and other members of his government—of his party to support a very good green initiative.

Madam Speaker, we've been clear that every department is partially responsible, must do its part for the environment and that we've been tasked to do. We have a government that takes the environment

very serious. We have seen weather events coming forward. It affects us, whether it's in the Crowns, it affects us whether it's in Agriculture, affects us whether it's in Infrastructure, it affects us in all aspects, and we have to be aware of what's taking place.

And our government has taken a real strong lead, not just from what we've seen in the past, but also in Manitoba and across the nation. We have been absolutely on the forefront of this and I would suggest to members opposite that they get on board, support our legislation.

The member can follow along in Estimates. We are transferring money out of Manitoba Infrastructure into the green fund and then money can be withdrawn for green projects that we know will benefit all Manitobans.

We had this conversation yesterday with one of the—one of his colleagues about that. We have pristine lakes where you can actually go to the lake and cup your hands and drink water right out of it, and that is just amazing that we have the kind of pristine lakes. Those are the lakes that we want to protect and we want to make sure that we leave for future generations.

And having travelled around the world, yet you come back and you say, you know, we're—our government is on the right track now to protect our environment. The member can read in the Estimates books exactly what's taking place and we are really pleased that we finally have a government that is going to take the environment seriously.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** For a minister to not be able or not willing to simply explain numbers that are contained in his own department's budget does not bode well for the future of this green fund, so-called.

Perhaps it would be helpful if we just looked for the pieces that make up whatever the ultimate number is and did it that way. And the minister did some good work with his critic yesterday in getting that started. The minister went on the record as saying that \$7 million has been transferred in the green fund and then taken out again, money that goes to maintenance, and that another \$11 million is capital money that is from the department into the green fund and then back out again to the department. That's \$18 million.

We're not anywhere close to 30.6 or 32 yet, so can anyone tell me the other sources that are contributing to the green fund?

\* (11:40)

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, Madam Speaker, and, again, I'd like to point out to members of the committee we have a government that put forward a very clear environmental policy. Our Premier (Mr. Pallister) went out and he said, rather than having the Trudeau escalator where—and I'm sure members of the NDP would be ecstatic to see the carbon tax go to \$50, to \$80, to \$100, and who knows where that might land. The Premier was very clear that the basis of our environmental plan would be that there would be a cap, that the carbon tax would start at \$25 and be capped at \$25. The concern our government has is that with the Trudeau tax, that there is no cap; the target is \$50 a carbon ton, and it's never indicated that that is a hard-and-fast cap. So we understand that members opposite oppose road safety, they oppose the environment, they oppose everything.

Madam Speaker, the environmental policy that we put out in front of the Legislature is a reasoned, made-in-Manitoba solution. And what it allows for is it allows for all of those—and we have a very robust transportation industry in Manitoba—and it allows for them to have predictability. It's a concern to a lot of businesses that they face the prospect that they could actually see a carbon tax go up to \$50 and then exceed that.

*Mr. James Teitsma, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

So I would like to convey to members opposite, yes, every department is part of it. We're very, very clear that every department must participate, and it's not just the monies that are transferred into the green fund. It should be something that all of us should be part of as ministers, as leaders, as members of the Legislature, as opposition MLAs—also have a part in this, in that, how do we make our province increasingly more green without damaging the industries that employ Manitobans, that put money on the table, that feed our families, that allow our families to participate in the kinds of events that we like to participate in? So we feel that this is a very healthy balance between moving our province further along in a green economy and also protecting the jobs in our very robust transportation sector.

So I'd like to point out to the member opposite, yes, he is absolutely correct. Every department must be part of this, including Manitoba Infrastructure. We are part of this green fund. We are part of trying to be responsible stewards of our environment. I'd like to point out to the member opposite it's unfortunate that our federal government doesn't view

the investment that we're making in Manitoba Hydro, Madam Speaker. Manitobans, by the time the NDP projects will be done, will be sitting at \$26 billion in debt. We have indicated, to the Prime Minister and to the federal government, that should also be factored in when we have conversations on the carbon tax.

Manitoba is paying its fair share in trying to be as green as they can be. Again, we had an NDP government that was far too overzealous in building hydro lines in the wrong direction and dams that never went through the proper process and should have had the proper review.

All of that having been said, Manitobans are still going to be paying the interest on that debt, but that should also be viewed as part of our contribution to a 'green'—green economy.

In fact, Manitoba's going to be sitting on a lot of energy. We can help other provinces and other jurisdictions in helping them become green, and we have made the argument that that should also be part of our contribution to greening the environment.

And my time has run out, and I'm prepared to give the rest of my answer after the next question.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** So the minister so far has been either unable or, more likely, unwilling to tell the public whether or not 30 and a half million dollars or \$32 million is involved in the green fund. He is also, so far, unable or, more likely, unwilling to provide any information on what makes up that 30 and a half—or \$32-million in-and-out scheme.

Do you think—does the minister think his constituents would be proud of learning about his performance this morning? Every minister should be able to answer those types of very simple questions, and his constituents, I'm sure, would have the same reaction that I'm having: what is he hiding, and why does he think it's appropriate to hide basic information from the public?

So let me give him another chance. Let's talk about the \$7 million in maintenance that the minister himself referenced yesterday, like, just 24 hours ago—less than that—the minister indicated that 7 million of the dollars going into the green fund in this in-and-out scheme between the green fund and his department was for something called maintenance. Is the minister capable of providing any information about what maintenance means in the real world? What is that \$7 million going to do this year?

This is Estimates. I'm an opposition critic. I get to ask questions like that, and the minister should answer them. It's not rocket science. Go ahead.

\* (11:50)

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, I think the public is very pleased that they now have a government—including my constituents—that they now have a government that's put a green plan in front of the Manitoba Legislature. They've put it in front of the people of Manitoba.

What I think they would be very perturbed about is they've got a so-called fake NDP green party that won't allow that to go to debate. In fact, if there is a group of individuals that are trying to stifle debate on the environment, as they did for 17 years—the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) included—who never could meet a target if their finances depended on it, never seemed to achieve anything on the green file. And, when there's a green plan in front of the Legislature, will they allow it to go to committee where the public can come forward and have a debate on it? No. No, they shut it down.

I think that's where constituents and where members and the public of Manitoba would look at it and say, that is an absolute disgrace. In fact, what's even worse is we have now the member for the NDP referring to environmental issues and environmental plans as in-and-out schemes.

No wonder—no wonder—they could never meet a target. The member sat here and referred to the environmental plans as in-and-out schemes. And perhaps that's what he did when he sat, when he was in his own government—gave advice to ministers, gave advice to his premier, gave advice to his policy-makers that anything to do with the environment is an in-and-out scheme and that it is not worthy to proceed with.

I would say to the member that is offensive, that environmental issues are not in-and-out schemes, that they are not to be referred to as in-and-out schemes, that—in fact, the opposite. Investing in the environment, investing in green programs, investing, like I suggested to the member opposite, that we go and we test what it is that we do in the department. Of course, he doesn't want to hear that. You know, he says, well, that's not answering the question. When you actually go through and give examples—and I could for the member—real concrete examples that protect the environment, that help the environment, that are good for the environment—

those are the kinds of things that we should be talking about.

Instead, he wants to talk about in-and-out schemes and say that's what environment policy is all about. Actually, I think that's terribly offensive. Let's talk about real things, about how we can deal with the environment.

I would like to point for members opposite, we have probably one of the most robust composting families in the province of Manitoba. My youngest daughter and I, we went out one day and, at one of the fairs, we got one of those compost bins and we've turned it over several times. We make sure that everything is composted—anything and everything that can be recycled. And we've now had—where China is now no longer going to take our recycling unless it's between 80 and 90 per cent clean, and now we're going to make sure that what we recycle is always clean—what goes into the bin. Those are the things we should be talking about. How are we going to move our province forward in green initiatives after a disastrous, disastrous 17 years?

And I know he's sensitive about it. What he wants to do is flip pages and talk about this page versus that page and refer to anything green as an in-and-out scheme. Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk about concrete issues. Why doesn't he come forward and give some ideas of how he thinks we could be more green? Why doesn't he be progressive? Why doesn't he be more forward on things? Because the only thing he does is stall green legislation—just like the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) does nothing but stall safety legislation, the member for the environment on the NDP benches wants to ensure that green legislation is stalled, that the public never gets a chance to have their part and have their say in it that come forward with good ideas.

Why doesn't the member for Wolseley tell us what he thinks we should do to better and make our department even more green? And the reason is, why—because has no ideas. After 17 years of being bankrupt of any ideas on the environment, our government has come forward. And, yes, the Department of Manitoba Infrastructure is going to be part of that green plan.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** I'm giving the minister every ample opportunity to explain how this is not an in-and-out scheme, and he's actually the one who's refusing to step up to the plate and answer very simple questions about money within his department.



Why does this appear, to not just myself, but to the general public, to be an in-and-out scheme? Well, looking on page 86 of the minister's own budget it says, a transfer to the green fund of \$30,616,000 out of his department.

And then there are lots of instances, multiple instances in, again, his government's own document, their own budget. Page 89, looks like there's a recoverable from other appropriations under Water Management and Structures of nearly \$6 million.

Then, on the next page, page 90, Maintenance and Preservation of Water Related Assets, there's a Recoverable from other appropriations of nearly \$20 million.

And, not to be outdone by that, on page 91 we have Infrastructure Assets - Water Related, Amortization Expense, Interest Expense, Less: Recoverable from other appropriations of \$15.7 million.

None of these figures add up to the total number that's supposed to be going to the green fund. It looks very much like the government has transferred money to the green fund and then redirected it right back to the department for the department to keep doing whatever it was doing before, and that's fine, but the public deserves to know if the green fund is actually new money that's going to be funding new projects or if it's just a green washing of existing activities within his department.

And, if he wants to make it clear that this is not green washing, that there is new activity going to happen, as his government is claiming, coming out of the green fund, I'm giving him every opportunity to explain how that's happening. He's the one that's blocking the dialogue, Mr. Committee Chair.

So, you know, if he wants to thump the table some more and, you know, take that approach, I can't stop him, but the facts should be pretty easy for him to pull together. His staff are here in the room. Staff are highly trained, highly competent. They're the ones that would have pulled these numbers together. They will know the ins and outs of this and they will be able to give the minister every opportunity to refute the image that he himself is perpetuating today, that the so-called green fund is nothing more than a green-washed in-and-out scheme.

So, if he wants to refute that, here's his chance. I would love to know that the green fund is actually going to lead to more activity defending our environment. Please tell me how you're going to do

that or admit that this is just an in-and-out scheme of 30-something million dollars, and the minister doesn't even know the answer of how much money is involved. Take your pick.

**Mr. Schuler:** And what we have now is a very clear delineation. You have a government that believes in a green province, believes that we should have strong environmental policy, and we have a critic from the NDP who believes environmental policy is a Ponzi scheme; it's an in-and-out scheme.

\* (12:00)

The member for Wolseley has now clarified for all Manitobans that the NDP believe that the environment is nothing more than an in-and-out Ponzi scheme.

There. Now we have a very healthy separation of where we are on this debate. Our government believes that we should embrace environmental policy, that we should be doing things that are good for the environment, unlike the last 17 years, where the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) sat and saw, every time they talked, things go worse in the environment because, now we know why, because he believes anything to do with the environment is a Ponzi in-and-out scheme. Now we have it clear. No wonder we failed every time the NDP talked about the environment. Things went the opposite direction.

I would point to the member that if he pulls out his book, 2018-2019 Departmental Expenditure Estimates, page 95, Maintenance and Preservation of Water-Related Assets, Objectives: "Protect public investment in water-related assets and support their safe, efficient and optimum operation." There is a very good green way of doing things: efficient and optimum. "Acquire and analyze data to support water management, flood forecasting and flood mitigation efforts."

As part of our green initiative, we understand that we have gotten an awful lot of water-related events coming at us. We also have a partner out west who has not been as considerate of their neighbours to the east and have done a lot of drainage, 'cleanage' and are sending us a lot of water. What did the NDP do when they were in government dealing with their partners to the west? Nothing. Our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has dealt with the Premier of Saskatchewan and indicated to them, amongst other things, is that good neighbours don't flood good neighbours.

Furthermore: "Manage and administer flood protection programs for communities, homes, businesses, buildings that are prone to flooding."

We go on. Activity Identification: "Deliver the water-related maintenance and preservation program. Operate and maintain water management systems and networks. Conduct condition inspections and assessments of water-related assets. Support flood operational response. Act as the primary contact for stakeholders regarding water-related asset issues. Maintain the provincial hydrometric stations program. Preparation of flood risk maps through collection of light detection and ranging"—or LiDAR—topography data and hydraulic modelling. That, Madam Speaker—that, Mr. Chair, is incredibly important that we involve ourselves in this.

What we have done with our partners, federal partners, and with LiDAR, something the members opposite should've been far more interested in, is we can give a far better mapping of where water will go when we get water-related events. Members of—opposite should ask a little bit more. Why does the member not ask a little bit more about LiDAR and what that's going to mean for Manitobans and mean for our economy as we go further in our green economy?

I move on: Support ice jam mitigation activities; support activities to ensure efficient and effective hydrological forecast and water management strategies; acquisition and integration of flood forecasting data management software, flood forecasting models and hydrologic modelling tools; and administer individual flood protection programs to provide financial assistance for flood mitigation projects to protect individual homes and businesses; and administer and provide engineering support for community flood protection programs.

I would point out to committee, as we see weather patterns changing, as we see flood—the way that floods are coming at our province, that we need to be aware and we need to be prepared for that. That is all part of preparing ourselves not just for a green economy but for the kinds of changes that are taking place. And it is important that we invest there.

Expected Results: "The network of water-related assets is efficient, economical and sustainable." [interjection] And I am informed that my time has run out. I would be more than willing on the next question to complete the answer and let the committee know the kinds of expected results we want.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, Ponzi scheme is an interesting way to describe what his government has done. I don't know if there'll be a future question period maybe that might riff off of that to good effect. It's, you know, the minister's choice of words; it's not mine. But, I mean, the minister's answer, such as it was, does confirm exactly what I've been saying, that this entire section of his department's Estimates, where he lays out very worthwhile things that the department's doing this year, is what they did last year. There's even a number attached to what they did to achieve all of the goals and objective the minister just mentioned, and the number last year happens to be 2 and a half million dollars higher than it is scheduled for this upcoming year, which proves my point that the green fund is just an in-and-out scheme.

Work that was done by this department last year has been numerically transferred to the green fund to make it look big, and then all the money's pulled back into the department, so it can keep doing what it has always done.

There's nothing new in the green fund, and the minister just confirmed it, right, for us. So it took a while—you know, closer to an hour and something to finally get an answer. I don't think the minister intended to give me that answer, but he did. So I thank him for that.

Let's keep going. You know, this answers the \$17,534,000 Ponzi scheme, to use the minister's words, related to Maintenance and Preservation of Water Related Assets. Let's go to Infrastructure Assets - Water Related, Less: Recoverable from other appropriations, amortization.

You know, could the minister perhaps direct me to the page number, in the departmental books, and explain how paying the amortization costs on a water-related asset—is that related to money that's gone into the green fund and come back out again?

I'm done.

**Mr. Schuler:** So the NDP comes to committee; refers to green programs as in-and-out Ponzi schemes; and says, finally, now they have their answer. It took this committee for them to figure out that the reason why they failed for 17 years is because they view environmental funding and environmental programs as in-and-out Ponzi schemes.

You know, it can't get any stranger, or maybe it can with the member from Wolseley. After all, it was

him who came up with that incredibly unique unity pledge thing. So Winnipeg Free Press weighted in on that one, and we'll leave that one be.

The member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) should know that our government is earmarking monies for our green initiative, and we do not view it, as the members opposite, as the NDP. Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), the member for Wolseley view funding of the environment as an in-and-out Ponzi scheme. And, yes, the member for Wolseley needed to have that clarified for him. What a shameful approach to environment.

But it does answer the question, why is it that for 17 years, under the NDP, did the environment deteriorate? Why did, instead of coming close to even matching their targets, they actually underperformed considerably? It's because what we learnt here at committee: that the member for Wolseley put on the record that any monies that you put into the environment are an in-and-out Ponzi scheme. That is just remarkable.

That—I know committee is shocked at that, but shouldn't be, because, if we look at the track record of the member for Elmwood, the member for Wolseley and the NDP party—that they could never hit one of their targets.

Madam Speaker, yes, we are going to invest in infrastructure, green infrastructure; yes, we are going to review our departments to make us more green; yes, we are going to look at the way we do business, because there are a lot of areas where we can be a lot more green, where we can save. And sometimes it's not even that big of a savings. It's small savings all over the place, and they start to add up, and they make a big impact on society, something that the NDP members never had courage to do. They never had the courage to take these things on. Our government is prepared to do that.

\*(12:10)

And, if the member wants to sit and start talking about the kinds of things that we could be doing within our department, the kinds of savings we could have, I would point out to members we are looking at our fleet. Manitoba Infrastructure has a very large fleet. How can we be more green in the way that we run our vehicles? How can we be more efficient? How can we be more responsible and help the environment in the way that we do business?

That's all fair, that's all healthy, to be testing our department, and each and every one of us should be

testing ourselves. How can we be more efficient and be better for the environment. I would suggest to the member for Wolseley, member for Elmwood, you know, perhaps composting would be something they would like to look at. Perhaps recycling, something should be looking at. I'd like to point out to committee, yes, when we renovated our kitchen, we removed the garburator. I did not feel it was right to 'garburate' a whole bunch of biodegradables, send it over to the sewage treatment plant and then add extra burden on the sewage treatment plant in my community. There are ways that each and every one of us—and within the department—that our government and our department and each—every one of us can be far more green and be far more responsible for environmental policy. And the fact that the NDP review that as an in-and-out Ponzi scheme is very unfortunate, but a reason why they never met one of their targets.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Yes, I'll answer my own question since the minister seems unwilling or unable to do so.

If he would go to page 117 of the departmental expenditures Estimates for his department, he will see under sub-appropriation 15-5.(d) that—subsection (3), Infrastructure Assets - Water Related, the entire amount of \$20,200,000 has a little note next to it. And that little note, the explanation reads: Recovery of \$15,061 relates to climate and green fund for implementation of the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan.

So, when I asked how much of the so-called green plan—so-called green fund is actually money that the Department of Infrastructure has already been spending and is going to spend again, the minister could have very easily just said, look at page 117. And there's the answer. And now—it's part of the answer, it's not the whole answer, but we now have \$15,061,000 accounted for.

And let's be clear, these are amortization and interest expenses. That means this—the government built structures—built infrastructure related to water and is now paying them off. And so the government has decided that, somehow, that type of number belongs in the green fund. You should be glad Rick Mercer is retiring.

But we have \$15,061,000 accounted for there, we have 17 and a half million dollars, thanks to the minister's accidental answer earlier. So, doing some quick math, we've now got almost \$32.6 million of—to use the minister's term—a Ponzi scheme, in and

out, with his department, leading to absolutely no new action on the environment, on water, on biodiversity, on climate change, on anything.

Ponzi scheme's a good word for it. I think the minister actually gave us something useful with that phrase, today, because—and it's right in his own books. Page 117 of his own department's document, which I guess he didn't read close enough, because it was great of him to refer me to it. I give him credit for that. And then, page 97—yes, there it is. It's still there, unlike yesterday, because yesterday we had precise numbers of \$32,000,595 were involved altogether.

And now we know that the actual number is \$32,595,000. So may have been a little mix-up in the minister's numbers yesterday, or maybe it didn't come through clearly on the audio feed to the good folks in Hansard, but now thanks to the minister's accidental answer we can see on page 97 that, yes, 17 and a half million dollars of stuff the department was going to do anyways has been temporarily rebranded as funding the green fund.

And not to be outdone with that little scheme, the department's now claiming over \$15 million of amortization and interest costs is—belongs in the green fund as well. And that gets us to \$32.6 million roughly, \$32,595,000 out of a \$40-million green fund is—to use the minister's own words for it, an in-and-out Ponzi scheme.

I want to thank the minister for clarifying that for us. I didn't have high hopes that we would get that level of clarity today, but we did. He's done a job there.

I'll give him a chance, you know—there's still \$7-million-plus to account for in the green fund. Does the department have any other hidden—

**The Acting Chairperson (James Teitsma):** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Schuler:** When the member for Wolseley got himself involved in a civil war that was taking place in his party and decided to come up with all kinds of unity challenges, I think it was the Free Press that referred to some individuals within the NDP as brothers dim, so we want to make sure that we are very clear here and this is one of the problems with this NDP group is that they never let facts get in the way of their tirades. They very rarely know exactly what they're talking about.

So I want to go back to something that the member said. He said, why is it that yesterday was put on the record 32,595—\$32,595,000 and in the Estimates it says \$30,616,000. And if you go to page 86 of Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, page 86, it says very clearly 2017-2018 budget. So the member was confusing the budget that we're discussing with the 2017-18 budget. Yesterday—and if the member would've been paying attention yesterday, which he wasn't because he was far too consumed with whatever it was that he just did now and he tends to do, which makes absolutely zero sense.

It was made very clear—and he should go back and have a look what was put on the record. So, if you go to page 90 of this current budget that is under discussion, and if he goes to page 90, he goes to (b)(3) there is a category of \$17,534,000. Out of that comes \$12,395,000—is taken out of that fund and if he goes to page 91, and he goes to 15.5(d) and he looks at the \$20,200,000, if you add \$20,200,000 and the \$12,395,000, you come up with the figure of \$32,595,000 that was laid out yesterday.

But the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), who doesn't pay attention, who wants to have his own opinions and wants to falsely create his own facts, and he can't do that. He can't go and claim numbers from previous years and drag them into—as if it was this budget year and talk and talk and talk and talk and spend, spend, spend. He is the crafter of his own NDP party policy that—an environmental policy is nothing but an in-and-out Ponzi scheme.

\* (12:20)

The member for Wolseley has now called his party's viewpoint on the environment as in-and-out Ponzi schemes. No wonder—no wonder—the Free Press reflected on him and his colleagues when, and I choose my words carefully, when they ran an article about him.

To be very clear, that in the 2018-2019 budget, it is \$32,595,000 that goes into the fund, and I laid it out where exactly it comes from, and maybe the member should be careful that he doesn't misquote and take items out of the 2017-2018 budget and try to somehow misconstrue that as being the budget of 2018 and 2019.

I would point out to him those are two different budget years, and he should be very careful when he does that, because, you know, previously he had a premier and a Cabinet and a government that used to

spin around, protect him from this kind of stuff, and even they had trouble protecting the member opposite. He should be careful when he puts that kind of stuff on the record, and he goes back and he takes something that was said and spins it around and tries to make it into this narrow, false narrative that he's trying to put on the record.

To be very clear, we are comparing two different years.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, this has been loads of fun. The—if the minister knew what he just said an hour ago, he could have just answered it, because that was my first question. It's what—why is there a discrepancy between what he answered yesterday and what was in the budget documents. And I do want to thank him, again, for confirming that of the \$40 million the budget has put in a so-called green fund, that over 32 and a half million of that is just going to pay for things that his department was doing already.

And, you know, that was my main question here today, is: How much of this green fund is real and how much of it isn't? It's not in any way to disparage the environment-related work that the department is doing. That's fine, but you don't call that a green fund and expect to get away with it.

A green fund, the way the government has been describing it, suggests that there's a new \$40-million pot of money that's actually going to go to work and address some of the incredibly pressing environmental issues of—that we face. And it's quite clear, thanks to the Estimates process today, that that is absolutely not what is happening.

The vast majority of the money in the so-called green fund is a sham. It's not new money at all. It is money that has been taken out of one department, wrapped it up in some green ribbon and put some green paint on it, called it environmental, and then retracted it right away and put it back to what it was going to do anyways.

I mean, for goodness' sakes, you could go through every single department and, you know, pull out, you know, maybe a small contract that someone has to pick up the recycling bins over in the health facilities. Well, that relates to the environment. Let's put that in the green fund.

Or, you know, maybe someone drops off a water cooler so people have clean water to drink. Not that, you know, bottled water is necessarily better.

It's been proven quite often it's no better than tap water, but let's say someone's delivering clean water to our hardworking staff. Well, that kind of relates to the environment. Let's put that in the green fund, and then pull it back out again and just have things continue as usual.

That's the type of stuff that drives the public crazy, and it's thanks to the Estimates process that we were able to get clarity on that today. There was some sort of misrepresentation yesterday in what was said and what was written down in Hansard. I do not blame anybody for that. I am not calling that the minister's mistake or anything at all, but this is why having this type of conversation during Estimates is important.

In Hansard, because I just read it today, the document says \$32,000,595, and the minister has clarified today, and we have confirmed with his inadvertent help, that the actual amount of money temporarily being branded green and then sent back to paying interest costs on ditches and bridges and other infrastructure is actually \$32,595,000.

So I would argue this conversation was worthwhile for that clarification alone. The minister was given multiple opportunities to describe how it is that, you know, these dollar amounts added up. He was given ample opportunity to explain the breakdown in terms of real-world work that is going to happen as a result of the green fund. And he was unable or unwilling to do that.

That's disappointing, but, you know, his performance today is now on the public record. It was his own decision to approach this dialogue with me in the way that he did, and I have no control or understanding of how or why he chose to do that.

But the truth has come out and it's quite stark.

**The Acting Chairperson (James Teitsma):** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Schuler:** First of all, we had the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) falsely accusing a member of this Legislature's wife of being related to somebody and the story went on and on and on. It was wrong. The member for Elmwood was wrong. He falsely accused somebody, never apologized. Now that's disappointing.

Then we have the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), comes into committee and says there's \$2 million missing. Where's the \$2 million?

Madam Speaker, maybe the member for Wolseley feels that he can be as irresponsible in opposition as he was in government, but we're going to make sure that we test constantly what's being said by members opposite, because so far we can't find anything yet that was factually backable. Neither the member for Wolseley, neither the member for Elmwood, and, frankly, none of their members seem to be able to come up with an argument, something that actually is based on fact and not made up.

So, yes, the member's absolutely correct. We checked our numbers. We checked what was put on the record. It was absolutely accurate. The member from Wolseley seems to have a problem figuring out there's a difference between 2017 and 2018 budget—last year's budget and this year's budget. The member has a little problem with that.

We always make sure we check the numbers, we check the facts and we put that on the record. Something maybe members opposite, with all their budget that they get for staff, for doing research, maybe they should do a little bit better. Or maybe they should do better. They can't keep coming to session, they can't keep coming to committee and putting stuff on the record that is not true. They can't keep doing that. This isn't a joke. This is Estimates.

And the member sat and made all kinds of accusations in the beginning, and then when it's pointed out that he had his two years wrong, that maybe he should have paid attention when it was explained the first time, and then he says, well, you know, whatever.

And then he goes on and he attacks any green initiative that any government puts forward because they failed to achieve any one of their commitments. In fact, if—right before they were summarily defeated in a significant way, they had put forward a green plan that basically would have removed every road off the—every vehicle off the roads of every street in Manitoba, and they knew there wasn't a chance they would ever get to that, Mr. Chair.

I would suggest to members opposite that—start doing your homework, start doing your research and deal with the facts, and stop getting it so wrong. Stop slugging people, stop smearing people and start getting your years right in your budget when you put stuff on the record.

**The Acting Chairperson (James Teitsma):** The hour being 12:30 p.m., committee rise.

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

\* (10:00)

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

The floor is now open for questions.

The honourable Leader of—oh, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I think, obviously, my first question is, who is ready for game 2 of the Winnipeg Jets versus the Minnesota Wild? *[interjection]* Yes, hopefully the Wild aren't ready. But I'm confident that, even if they are, that the Jets got something for them and, you know, our team had a very good start the other day and set the tone with high-intensity play and a lot of physicality. So, very inspiring for the city. Good times. But, of course, I'm being just a little—having a little fun, there.

Did want to talk about education a bit this morning and begin just by asking the Premier: we've heard an announcement that the province wants to move to province-wide bargaining with teachers, so I'm wondering if the Premier can explain when that decision was taken to move towards province-wide bargaining with the teachers in Manitoba?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** The province-wide bargaining position has been spoken about, but there's a process to make it happen that has to be followed. And that will take time because, of course, there's just a process of bargaining that's been in place for some time that involved each school division, trustees involved in that process at a local level, and so on.

And to make the change in that would require legislation, I believe. I don't see my clerk nodding his head sideways, so I believe that's true. There would be legislative requirement to make that change.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I guess just to clarify: Has the government made the decision to province-wide bargaining, and it's just a matter of rolling out that process and bringing in legislation at a later date, or is this something that's still under consideration? It's not yet been decided on?

**Mr. Pallister:** It's been decided on. Of course, it requires a process to enact, though. So it will happen.

It's been advocated for by my old union for some time, even since the days I was a union rep, which is prior to the Jets—before the Jets left and prior to the Jets coming back. So a long time ago.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the current agreements that teachers are in expire at the end of June. Is there going to be anything done on that day? Like, will there be a move from the province on June 30th towards province-wide bargaining for teachers?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, as I said before, it's a process, and that process takes time. The—I think that old description about, what is it, people shouldn't watch law being made or wieners—often applies in terms of bargaining, in particular at the—with respect to the teachers. It is not always a pretty process, but it has been a—according to the MTS, it's been a process that's involved a lot of duplication for a long time.

A lot of taking time of teachers away from their students, without—in terms of the usefulness of that time, according to the MTS, not a good use of teachers' time and all the different divisions. Each division, of course, has a—representatives in the—at the table, and many of the teachers have communicated, over the last number of years, to the—to their union that they feel this is less than a productive use of their time.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, when teachers' contracts expire on June 30th, does the Premier (Mr. Pallister) expect that there will be province-wide bargaining on that day?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, I've tried to clarify the member: it's a process, so there has to be a process, also, of consultation that'll have to be followed. But the goal is clear, and the goal is to reduce to number of collective agreements, reduce the erosion of time, in particular, front-line teaching staff, so that they can educate as they were trained to do and as they desire to do.

And to—I think, ultimately, the argument has been made by not—certainly not just the MTS but by others, including school trustees, on occasion, that having more consistency between and amongst school divisions, in terms of collective agreements, would be helpful.

There—you know, there's going to be, there are going to be, I expect, in the process, you know, various points of view. That is understandable. There are various points of view in every school board and in every staff room in the province. So they're going to be different points of view, but I think the larger

goal is to have more effective use of time, more effective outcomes, at the end of the day, and less erosion of the front line, a focus that educators in our province want to have.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the Premier has talked about a process to move towards province-wide collective bargaining with the teachers. What is the timeline to implement this process?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, those consultations with the school boards, with MTS are under way. I expect they'll continue.

**Mr. Kinew:** And they will continue towards what date? Like, when is the timeline at least targeted, at this point, to be completed and when would the legislation that the Premier is talking about be brought in?

**Mr. Pallister:** That'll depend on the progress of the consultations.

**Mr. Kinew:** And what—what legislative framework would be required, at least as of the discussions right now? Is this a Public Schools Act? Labour Relations Act? What sort of legislative pieces would require amendment?

**Mr. Pallister:** I don't like to speculate, but I'll speculate that The Public Schools Act would be involved in the enactment, but I don't want to pre-judge the consultations. They're just nicely under way, I understand, so we'll let them take their course.

\*(10:10)

**Mr. Kinew:** So, if the province-wide bargaining comes into place—or sorry, if it doesn't come into place, because there's no legislation on the Order Paper right now, it wouldn't pass by the end of June 30th. Does that mean that the Premier will proclaim Bill 28 and sort of get to de facto province-wide bargaining in the interim?

Should I repeat the question?

**An Honourable Member:** No, I got it. I'm okay—

**Mr. Kinew:** Will the Premier proclaim Bill 28 after June 30th, when the teachers' contracts expire just as a—maybe an interim form of province-wide bargaining?

**Mr. Pallister:** As I said earlier, the consultations are under way, and it wouldn't be without precedent under previous governments—NDP and Conservative governments—that teachers negotiations often weren't concluded until two, three, four years even after the

termination date of the existing contract. It wouldn't be the first time.

**Mr. Kinew:** Does the Premier (Mr. Pallister) plan to proclaim Bill 28 this summer?

**Mr. Pallister:** Manitoba's a wonderful province, full of community events. I plan to attend most of them this summer.

**Mr. Kinew:** Most community events? That's a pretty ambitious target. We'll have to ask about that in QP when we come back in the fall and, you know, we'll be sure to wag our finger and say, yeah, there's a broken promise, Madam Speaker, et cetera, et cetera.

But, no. The question again is: Does the Premier plan to proclaim Bill 28 this summer?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'll undertake and answer that question when I find out when the member's going to table that commission of investigation on harassment that he undertook to provide, I think, over two months ago. I think that would be really helpful.

I've emphasized to him before we need to work together to end harassment here and so having a silent commission that is kept secret would be just perpetuating the culture of concealment that existed too much in the past. We need to benefit from the work that his able commissioners have undertaken and promise to complete, I believe, by now.

And so I—again, I would encourage him to release that report. If there's, you know, there's no problem with the NDP in terms of harassment today, then he can take credit for that and I think that would give peace of mind to everybody in the building. If there is a problem, it should be clarified and it should be addressed and that's certainly the approach we've taken as a government and I believe it's the approach that would be in the best interests of all who work here.

**Mr. Kinew:** There's been a—some strike actions by teachers in the States recently that have, sort of, gotten a lot of attention in American media, and there's been some sort of labour actions in some parts of Canada, I guess. Notably, Nova Scotia.

I'm wondering, what does the Premier think about the no-strike provision that has applied to teachers in this province for a long time now?

**Mr. Pallister:** Sorry, was the member suggesting we should eliminate the no-strike provision that has existed in Manitoba for some time?

**Mr. Kinew:** No. I'm asking the Premier's views in an attempt to ascertain whether he would try and move

towards changing that. Again, I would not want to interfere with the collective bargaining rights of teachers.

**Mr. Pallister:** Nor would I.

**Mr. Kinew:** Why has the Premier not answered the question on the proclamation of Bill 28?

Is there, you know, some sort of an issue with the proclamation of the bill? Is it, you know, one of the challenges to it that is causing concern, or is there some other issue that perhaps the Premier could share that would highlight why this hasn't been proclaimed?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, no unknown issues. The issues are well understood, I think, by most. The issues are that we have a structural deficit we inherited at close to a billion dollars. The expenditures far exceed the revenues, and the revenues derived from Manitobans' pocketbooks are significant.

The—Manitobans have endured some of the largest tax increases in the country in the last number of years under the NDP. And so there's a concern, certainly, that's real, that was demonstrated in the results of the election of '16 that 'Manitobas' don't—they feel they're taxed to the max. They don't want to pay more taxes, and they understand. They're smart people they understand that the deficit is just a tax delayed and with interest attached to it. So, when you have a billion-dollar deficit, you got a problem.

We've taken the approach that we're working to find savings to reduce that deficit amount, so we can get to balance before it's too late, before interest rates rise significantly, before NDP hydro hikes come into play, before other governments continue, like the federal Liberals, to raise taxes and local governments continue to raise taxes too.

So we recognize that Manitobans are having a struggle to make ends meet. Many families have less than—according to a recent study I read, more than 50 per cent of households in Manitoba have less than \$200 to spend at the end of the month. And so, obviously, for us, continuing with a status quo wasn't acceptable—you know, and the deficits weren't just approaching well over \$900 million, they were going up.

So, according to Treasury Board officials, when I was first briefed, they said that if we—even if we don't keep a single additional commitment made by the NDP during the election, which was to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars of promises, as we



all remember, even if we don't do that, we're going to see a deficit in '19-20 of \$1.6 billion. That's an annual deficit.

**An Honourable Member:** Nineteen-twenty?

**Mr. Pallister:** Nineteen-twenty fiscal year, we would see a deficit of \$1.6 billion. That would be a one-year deficit. So, clearly, we were on the wrong path and had to take steps urgently to avoid that course of action, if you can call it course of inaction, I suppose, under the previous government would be a better way to describe it.

So, clearly, we have to get a handle on our expenditure side, because although the NDP always goes to the revenue side, it seems, to find solutions; you know, never met a tax they didn't like and never met a tax they wouldn't hike.

So, after a series of increases in tax over the last four or five years of the NDP term, we felt, as a government, that that was not the course of action to be followed and that there needed to be management decisions made on the expenditures side. And so that's why we've launched into a number of initiatives to try to find waste, to try to find overlap, to try to find duplication, why we've reduced our expenditures.

My office is about half the size of Greg Selinger's, in terms of staffing. My budget is just a little over half what the previous premier's budget was—to try to set a tone at the top that demonstrated we're responsible money managers and responsible and respectful of the tax situation Manitobans find themselves in.

But, again, you know, just the impact of the NDP in the last couple of years of their term, on our credit rating, was a tremendously significant thing. Estimates in the tens of millions of dollars of additional costs every time a credit rating is downgraded two downgrades in the morning.

And, if my assistant would find it for me, I can share with the member some of the comments from the bond rating agencies and from the financial institutions about our performance in our first two years. There's some real positive response, and I'm pleased to share it with the member—the this is important, because it assures, not only the Province but also the City of Winnipeg and other municipal governments whose credit rating is based largely on the provincial performance, that they don't see an erosion of the dollars available to them.

And, speaking to the mayor, he certainly appreciated the fact that we've taken a responsible approach, which is meant that as opposed to under the previous government when their City's credit rating was downgraded along with the provincial credit-rating downgrade, that added millions of dollars of costs to them; they couldn't put that into water and sewer projects, anything else. So he appreciates the fact that we've endeavoured to get a handle on our expenditure side. Just as all municipal governments must, by legislation and—so I'll get into the commentary from some of the bond rating agencies and so on.

And we'll finish by complimenting our Health Minister and our colleagues who have been involved in the Treasury Board and our fiscal stabilization committee, I call it, that have been looking with a fine-tooth comb for savings and trying to find ways to get us to a situation that every householder in Manitoba understands they have to be in: of balance, to sustain the important programs that we have to sustain in our province.

**Mr. Kinew:** Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) allow contracts with teachers to be signed after June 30th?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, as I said, out of respect for the process of consultation, I'll let the consulted process continue.

\*(10:20)

I would share with the member, though, that here—these comments, this is the first one, is March 13th, so just three weeks a bit ago, before the Jets made the playoffs. Dominion Bond Rating said that the 2018 budget exceeded Dominion Bond Rating's expectations.

I would mention that it was consecutively for almost two decades before under the NDP where the word exceeded expectations, that that phrase would never have appeared unless they were referring to spending. If they were referring to spending, yes, the NDP's performance exceeded expectations virtually every single year. They spent more than they said they would in every department of government with the exception of Infrastructure—not Infrastructure, where they consistently underspent until, well, guess what, 2015, the year before the last election.

And then there were steady growth signs all over the province promoting projects; conspicuous construction, yes.

Another quote from Dominion Bond Rating: The government's commitment to deficit reduction now appears increasingly credible with two years of budget outperformance and an ongoing focus on spending discipline.

As opposed to the member's assertion about cuts, of course, we haven't cut in any department with the exception this year of Growth, Enterprise and Trade. So our spending commitments are not only being kept, they're consistent, and departmental officials know that. We've also done this without layoffs.

We've allowed people—yes, we've allowed people to retire without being replaced, for sure we've done that. And we've committed to reducing the overall size of the civil service by 8 per cent in our first term, but we have not been laying people off. It's less than one fifth of 1 per cent is the total number, and for many of those folks, because our unemployment rate is so low, because people are retiring on a rotational basis, really—it seems our baby boomers are wanting to not work when they hit 65 or sooner in some cases—that openings occur on a regular basis.

So we don't anticipate that there'll be, really, any significant loss of employment as a consequence of what we're doing. It's a moderate approach. It's a balanced and reasonable approach, keeps people working, as opposed to many other provincial governments who have taken significant steps to lay people off in the last few years as they have tried to wrestle with the problems the NDP government previously ignored.

And so, as we face these challenges together, we do it with the front-line workers of our system, government workers, in mind. But we also do it with the private sector employees in mind, as opposed to the previous government, where they saw the private sector as a cow to be milked and raised taxes on the private sector on a regular basis, not just a raising of the PST—that's a—that was a \$300 million hit for Manitobans—but also the broadening of it.

So you see people in the private sector who have a little business hit with taxes on, you know, doing—styling someone's hair. And you hear from people who run hair salons, as I did, who were faced with decisions that were tremendously difficult because of that 8 per cent tax hike, and their payroll tax increases, the tax on benefits also going up by 8 per cent. I remember one woman in the Charleswood area telling me that she had to make a decision, as she was pretty near tears, she had to

make a decision to lay off one of her two employees and they'd both been with her over 15 years. And they're obviously friends, you know, working together, but she said, I can't maintain my business this way and I've got no choice.

That's the kind of thing that happens in the real world in the private sector when you start jacking up costs. People have to—have choices to make, and they're difficult choices to make. So we recognize that and we respect the people who invest in private—small businesses.

And that's why we stood up against the federal Liberal government's proposals to jack up taxes on small-business people and their accusations that small-business people were tax evaders while they were abiding with laws made by Pierre Trudeau. Yes, used—they used that phrase tax evasion in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister and the Finance Minister, Bill Morneau, used that phrase over 50 times—tax evader—for people who had abided by the laws and had taken risks and employed people and done the best they could to support themselves, their families, their customers for decades. And it was a hurtful approach, boy, wrong-headed approach.

**Mr. Kinew:** On June 30th of this year, the agreements with teachers will expire.

Now, we know that the Province has not brought in legislation to enact province-wide bargaining by June 30th of this year. Based on the Premier's (Mr. Pallister), you know, dodges to previous questions, it seems like they're not going to proclaim Bill 28.

So I'm wondering if there are agreements signed this summer, after June 30th, with teachers, will the Premier respect those agreements?

**Mr. Pallister:** As previously asked, and previously answered, but I would say—I would ask the member this: if another incident of harassment involving an NDP MLA comes to light in the next number of months, and the member has suppressed an internal report that he promised would be made public, how will he look?

He said that he cares deeply about this issue, yet his actions haven't—they belie that commitment. And I'm asking him again to fulfill his commitment, made to all Manitobans not just to his own political staff, to shed light on the study, this commission he's pulled together so that we can deal with this issue

now, because he's asking me a hypothetical question, and I'll reciprocate.

If another incident comes to light in future months, the member has to ask himself: How will that reflect on his decisions? He's chastised Greg Selinger for knowing about these abuses and not acting, and I don't—in Mr. Selinger's absence, I don't wish to add to these critical comments. I respect the fact he had said that he wasn't aware. Others have said he was. Others have said his chief of staff was; therefore, they expect he would have been aware.

And the member has said, in various times in the media comments, that I'm looking for now as we discuss this issue, but comments, as I recall, like: Mr. Selinger's—it's time for Mr. Selinger to go; it's a failure of leadership, I believe he called it; the NDP did not deserve to win the last election. Things like that.

Now, I don't—none of us wants to see a repeat of the Struthers incident or any other behaviour that's offensive or threatening to people who work here or anywhere else in the civil service. That I would expect, but we must respond accordingly, given the opportunity, and we have the opportunity to do that now. And so, when the member says, and I'm quoting here now, he says: I'm very disappointed in the NDP. We're supposed to be the party that protects the vulnerable.

Exactly. I agree with him. Supposed to be; now, do it. You've done a study. If there are no—if there's no problem, say so. Let's come clean. That's good, and let's work together to make changes, as we are beginning that process and as we are enthusiastically focussed on doing.

But let's work together; not continue this culture of concealment that caused these problems to happen, that caused them to continue and reoccur, time after time, again and again, with other staffers, then, either afraid to report incidents, or, in reporting them, being ignored or told to suck it up.

And the member has a great opportunity to show leadership on this issue. He's done it verbally in the press; it's been well reported. He's disappointed in the NDP, failure of leadership, chastised, asked the former premier to resign on the basis of this issue.

And now he has the opportunity to demonstrate the courage of his convictions and I just—I fail to see why he would not do so.

I implore him to do so, so that we can all work together to end harassment, throughout government and elsewhere. So we can set an example that will protect people better against these kinds of behaviours that should never have happened and should not be condoned ever.

And I just implore him to do that. I think it—far be it from me to give him political advice, but I would say, if there is another incident that comes to light after this and he hasn't acted, he's going to wear it. And he doesn't need to; he shouldn't. But he's creating a situation where he's going to.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, Mr. Chair, I'd remind the Premier (Mr. Pallister), through you, that the question is about province-wide bargaining for teachers.

Some teachers' unions, or some locals, I guess, have given notice that they intend to bargain. They've already given this notice that they're going to try and enter into new agreements. If they sign an agreement before or after June 30th, will the Premier respect those agreements?

\*(10:30)

**Mr. Pallister:** Again, I see the member ignoring the issue I've raised, and it's almost as if it was only an issue two months ago and is no longer an issue to him. It's almost as if he doesn't care anymore about this. And it was in the news, and he had to do damage control. He was right there in front of the cameras talking about how disappointed he was in the NDP, and now he's disappointing the NDP and everybody else with his failure to act.

I have previously answered his questions in regard to respecting the process of moving to a more efficient and effective way of bargaining, and so I will simply repeat that 38 school divisions, each with a teachers' collective agreement, has been an issue that teachers have raised and their union have raised for a long time as being an ineffective way to use teachers' time, not to mention the time of school trustees around the province as well and the resources entrusted by taxpayers to the process of collective bargaining as well.

So we're looking to act on the advice of others. We're looking to consult with these groups and others to move to a system that works better. We will be looking to also reduce the number of bargaining units elsewhere in government. That is important because we know that our situation here in terms of collective bargaining and bargaining units is an antiquity. We know that other provinces have moved

ahead co-operatively, that their labour leaders have, in some cases, initiated a dialogue and have certainly participated co-operatively, as opposed to Manitoba's labour leaders, in respect of moving towards a smaller number of bargaining units so that people could spend less time bargaining at a table with—rather than doing the pipefitting, electrical work and cleaning that they were trained to do, and that is a good thing, and it's happened in other provinces, and it needs to happen here, so we'll legislate that, as we have said.

The bargaining—number of bargaining units in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia combined is 19, and in the Winnipeg RHA, 186–186. And so people are being taken off their front-line work and sat—sitting at a bargaining table in hundreds of cases, when they would rather be working at the job that they were trained to do.

The costs, administratively—and front-line workers are telling us this. They know that there are additional costs; there's additional confusion. Just—I was told that just in the central RHA alone, there are over 40 different compassionate leave clauses, so no wonder you have more administration and more top-heavy structures in your RHAs when you have to oversee that many different clauses.

Imagine a couple both working in that RHA, but one's in a different bargaining unit than the other. Well, you know, her grandma dies and her partner can't go to the funeral with her because it's a totally different structure in terms of compassionate leave.

That's just one example. We have other examples where people in under-deployed sections of a facility that are overstaffed can't move staff across the hall to another section because a different bargaining unit.

We've got people, union members, telling us that this bargaining structure creates a waste of time for them, and we have managers telling us it creates a waste of money for them: difficulties in shifts—shift organization, problems with respect to the complexities naturally involved with the management of labour structures when millions of dollars are being spent to take people away from what they're trained to do and put them at a bargaining table, you know, 186 times, just in the Winnipeg RHA.

So these—the idea here is to reduce the number of bargaining sectors and units down so that the bargaining structure can work more effectively and

more efficiently for the members, for the workers and also for the administration and management. You've got a more effective structure that way.

And so similar logic applies with respect to teachers and the structure that we would move towards there. And these two things aren't separate. Moving forward with a better bargaining structure for health-care workers should not preclude moving ahead with a better and fairer bargaining structure for teachers as well.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, on the issue that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is talking about, the number of bargaining units, can the Premier tell the committee when he plans to proclaim Bill 29?

**Mr. Pallister:** In due course. Now, in terms of the bond rating agencies, the bond rating agencies have been very impressed with the work of our Finance Minister and my colleagues. They have said so. And this is something to celebrate. I'm sure the member shares our joy at the positive comments, because they are reflective of a genuine commitment that they are at least as importantly reflective of actual outcomes. Previously, the NDP stated, year after year, that they were going to bend the cost curve; they committed to reducing the growth and the rate of spending and failed to achieve any real change despite those commitments year after year.

If you—the member's interested, he could reread the budget speeches from 2010 to 2016, and he'd find commitments in every budget speech to reduce the rate of growth of spending, and then he'd note at the end of the year, increasing deficits in all but one of those years. So the government committed to doing things better; the previous government failed to do things better. The bond rating companies saw them breaking their word, year after year after year.

It's puzzling as to why the junkets that the Finance minister—the previous Finance ministers would take were even deemed to be justifiable given the fact that no matter who they met with, after the first two or three years of not keeping their word, no one would believe what they said anyway.

In fact, the first meetings we had with bond rating agencies after we became government, were met with the same kind of cynicism: Why should we believe you? The previous government didn't keep its word. Those were the comments from bond rating agencies. Well, now they're saying things like, the budget exceeds our expectations. That's Dominion Bond Rating. The government's commitment to

deficit reduction appears increasingly credible, with two years of budget outperformance and an ongoing focus on spending discipline. That's high praise. It's high praise, and it means millions of dollars more for Manitobans; millions of dollars less of deficits and taxes; millions of dollars more available for important projects in health care, Child and Family Services, education and the like. So that's good news. It's good news for Manitoba workers who like stability and security in their own lives and who like to see it in their governments as well.

Another quote from bond rating: It says the adjusted debt-Dominion Bond Rating suggested debt calculation projects to remain stable around 43 per cent of GDP in '18-19. So, in spite of the fact that we've got a debt burden that has gone up to over \$1 billion this year, we're managing to hold steady on our debt-to-GDP ratio. That's a tremendous accomplishment, something to be—that's praiseworthy, I think, for all our colleagues, and they deserve to give each other a pat on the back.

Moody's Investors Service, which has issued a report, as well, about three weeks ago, said, and I quote: 2018 budget narrows deficit forecasts. It is credit-positive, but interest costs will continue to edge upwards. Well, that's a warning. That's a warning for the future, because as interest rates rise, and they have been somewhat already, our burden of debt-service charges rises as well. And those debt-service charges rise because of NDP mismanagement. I know the member has said he doesn't care that hydro rates have to go up, because he's just going to blame us for it. The same could be said about the general debt-service costs, of course, because the debt-service costs will rise as interest rates rise, and that's understandable for anybody who's got a mortgage here. But why are they rising? Well, because of the mortgage amount. Well, what's the mortgage amount? Well, it's double what it was six years ago, before the NDP got voted out of office. That's significant. It's billions and billions of dollars and millions of dollars of debt service, additionally, that we have to pay that can't go to education or health care, roads, anything else.

Moody's goes on to say: In its recently released 2018 budget, the Province of Manitoba revised downward its consolidated deficit forecast for the four-year period 2018-19 to 2023-24 and for the 2017-18 fiscal year. We view this as credit-positive. That's great news, and that's the first such news for many, many years in Manitoba.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, a little while ago, we learned that the Province had joined a legal challenge against a provincial piece of legislation in Nova Scotia. It's Bill 148 that the Nova Scotia government had brought in. I wonder if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) could tell us about the rationale for entering that court challenge. Why did he decide to enter in that court challenge on a provincial piece of legislation in another province, and who advised him to launch that challenge?

\* (10:40)

**Mr. Pallister:** Might encourage the member to understand this is hardly unique. The NDP joined in such activities, I believe, four dozen times. And so, hardly unprecedented that the province would take an interest in court actions elsewhere. The NDP made a habit of it.

And I would also let the member know that being an observer in a court action not only is not without precedent—under the previous government that was done many, many times—but that the total commitment, in terms of cost, is approximately \$3,500.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, when the Premier talks about these other extra-jurisdictional court challenges, how many of those previous ones were joining onto actions before the Supreme Court or some other sort of court with a national jurisdiction, as opposed to ones in other provincial court jurisdictions?

**Mr. Pallister:** I can dig that up for the member. I'd say most of them would be Supreme Court issues. Nonetheless, I would argue that we are, naturally, as a province, interested in observing, and have been for sometime, the outcome of court actions. The NDP did it dozens of times.

I would also let the member know that the good news around our budget and positive commentary wasn't limited to just Moody's or the Dominion Bond Rating Service. I can share with him that Scotiabank also issued a commentary on our budget, and they said, and I quote now, the budget also announces the largest ever enhancement of the basic personal amount in the 2019 and 2020 taxation years.

In 2019, the basic personal amount will rise to \$10,392 from \$9,382; in 2020, to \$11,402 from \$10,392. This measure is projected to remove more than 31,000 people from the tax rolls and reduce Manitoba's income taxes by more than \$77 million in 2019 and another \$78 million in 2020, for a

cumulative reduction of \$158 million in full-year revenue.

So that was Scotiabank and they—commenting positively on the reduction in personal tax. I would, for clarification, say to the member that that is fully 20 per cent more, in terms of the enhancement of the basic personal amount, 20 per cent more in our first term that the previous NDP government did in four terms.

And that that will, in fact, be very important for Manitoba families, given the challenges they will face with higher costs, higher interest rates, higher NDP hydro bills, and so on. So having more—you know, \$2,020 more dollars on the kitchen table for every worker in Manitoba, that may not seem like much to some but that's a significant amount of money for more Manitobans to have, that they deserve to have. It's their money, after all.

And these are the types of things that the previous government was immune to. In terms of lowering personal tax, not significant action in that over four terms, but we are taking significant action, because we realize Manitobans deserve a break, especially in view of recent impositions on their take-home pay, as a result of escalating taxes under the previous government, in particular in their last term of office.

**Mr. Kinew:** Okay so, in addition to coming up with the numbers of the outside court interventions that would have been before the Supreme Court, as opposed to, say, in another provincial court, can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) also provide a list when he comes back with that figure? Can he bring in a list of what those other court challenges were, just so we can kind of cross-reference things and make sure we are able to, you know, just sort of have the best possible information as we're looking at that?

**Mr. Pallister:** Just for perspective, for a second, the member's asking me a question about a \$3,500 expense and the NDP doubled the provincial debt to the tune of almost \$20 billion in additional debt in just five and a half years, six years before the last election. So, in terms of perspective and relative importance, I would suggest the member could consider that some of the largest issues impacting on Manitoba and Manitobans are escaping him at this point.

I would say that the Scotiabank commentary, for example, is far more relevant, because what it means is a savings of literally tens of millions dollars in

debt-service costs if we do not get another credit rating downgrade. And the indications are, from those who look at our fiscal management, that we will not now get a credit rating downgrade. We were on a warning—or a negative watch under the NDP, after having two credit rating downgrades. And that could have meant literally tens of millions of additional tax dollars going out of the pockets of Manitobans.

And he's undertaken previously, so the member can belabour the point if he wishes, but he's also reinforcing the point that his perspective or priority is somewhat off-kilter. Thirty-five hundred dollars is what he's talking about, and we're talking about saving Manitobans tens of millions of dollars.

Again, back to Scotiabank, because I think the member would find this—I hope he would find this a positive thing. Over the 13 years before—and this is a quote from the Scotiabank analysis. Over the 13 years before, 2016-17, core expenditure budgets were continuously overspent. If the forecast for the fiscal year about to end is on the mark, it will be the second year in a row of below-budget spending. The province's credit rating was downgraded three times, they say, in three years. They're including a negative watch comment as a downgrade, and it can have a negative impact on debt-service costs.

So I think that's a fair interpretation of that negative watch analysis, but it says the province's credit rating was downgraded three times in three years. Demonstrating fiscal responsibility is a way to arrest that trend.

So this is good news. It hasn't been reported, but it's—I'm reporting it to the member today, that I see it as tremendously good news for Manitoba taxpayers. It's—it gives a sense of certainty, a greater sense of confidence to people, consumers would benefit by that confidence. Small-business people, also, would benefit by that confidence.

It goes on to say Manitoba has attracted a record number of skilled workers, entrepreneurs and their families, mostly because of an immigration policy centred on the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. And I would insert on—and was probably part of a government that brought that program into being, and that program was built on over the years and it has really enhanced our ability to maintain growth in our province. And Scotiabank goes on to say Manitoba's population has accordingly grown the fastest of any province over the last three years.

Recent enhancements to the program will make it easier for people to come to Manitoba to settle and build their careers in this province. And, by that, they're referencing, of course, the elimination of that wait that was afflicting that program for some time. That wait was referenced, as I recall, in not one but two throne speeches given by the NDP in their last term. Yet they didn't address the wait; they just talked about it, promised to address it. This government, in its first two years, has virtually eliminated that wait and has made it much more effective as a program in terms of its ability to give people who have hope a chance to generate that hope here in this beautiful province. And we're very impressed with the work that has been done by a minister in respect of getting that wait time virtually eliminated.

It should be noted also that our taxpayer protection act requires us to show progress in moving towards a balanced summary budget. It requires that progress to be made. The previous administration gutted that bill and made sure that there were no consequences for failure, because failure became the norm in that particular administration.

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, the reason why I was asking about that intervention with the Nova Scotia bill is not just because, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is sending money out of the province to intervene in another province's labour dispute, but it's also, I guess, because of some of the issues that are contained within that bill and, I guess, the potential spinoff effects that intervening in that case may have.

\* (10:50)

So the bill in Nova Scotia would freeze wages for many, many public sector workers, including teachers, and it would also really, really change the way that retirement benefits could be accessed by those teachers. You know, some people call it an attack on the retirement benefits of those teachers.

So, you know, the Premier's confirmed that, you know, he's intervened in this matter, but, again, I'd like to know why and specifically why does the Premier believe that this law in Nova Scotia, which freezes wages and attacks the retirement benefits, why does the Premier believe that that law is constitutional?

**Mr. Pallister:** I didn't say I did.

**Mr. Kinew:** So does the Premier believe it is unconstitutional?

**Mr. Pallister:** Discovering that would be part of the reason that we'd spend \$3,500.

**Mr. Kinew:** And why is that issue of particular interest to the Premier?

**Mr. Pallister:** That's self-evident.

**Mr. Kinew:** Please, spell it out for me.

**Mr. Pallister:** Surely the member is capable of ascertaining the self-evident nature of an intervention himself.

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, I'm very capable of forming my own inferences and deductions. However, I ask the Premier so that I can cross-reference such a deduction with the Premier's own rationale, so I would ask him to explain why he not only believes it's important to ascertain the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of Nova Scotia's Bill 148, but also why he believes that it's important to spend money to arrive at that derivation.

**Mr. Pallister:** If the member is as astute as he claimed, then he should be capable of figuring out for himself why we're interested in observing that particular court proceeding.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, please, Mr. Chair, I would ask the Premier again to explain the rationale behind this court case again. I suspect that it's because the Premier wants to have every tool at his disposal to be able to replicate the Nova Scotia playbook with respect to teachers when it, you know, comes time to his own policy agenda here in Manitoba, including the wage freeze and potentially the other aspects of this bill, but maybe not limited to that.

Maybe the Premier also would like to see the sort of labour actions that have happened in Nova Scotia. I certainly would not; work-to-rule campaigns and other things like that.

But, again, that is what I suspect. However, I would like the Premier to shed some light so that I can see whether, you know, the things that I have theorized are matched up with by what the Premier's rationale is.

So, again, why has the Premier decided to devote some resources towards establishing the constitutionality or not of Nova Scotia's Bill 148?

**Mr. Pallister:** I stand corrected. It's obvious to me, as a result of the Opposition Leader's comments, that

he is not capable of making a logical conclusion as far as the rationale for observing a court case in another provincial jurisdiction, and so let me edify him on this.

We are interested in observing the court proceedings in respect of the Nova Scotia court case, not with a view for advocacy, but for a view of obtaining information, and \$3,500 seems a reasonable investment to make in respect of that, certainly much more likely to bear some fruit and have a positive return for Manitobans than—I don't know—spending \$15 million on Tiger Dams that don't work, as the previous administration chose to do with six different untendered contracts over a period of years, non-disclosed.

So the member's perspectives are interesting, but they are only interesting in so far as they reveal his tendency towards fear, suspicion, and doubt, and he should not reflect, with malicious intent, on the desire of our government to learn, because that really is why one intervenes. And that is why the NDP intervened in dozens of cases over the last number of years, I expect, as well.

**Mr. Kinew:** So, just to clarify for the committee: the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has intervened in the Nova Scotia case. He's not merely acting as an observer; it is as an intervener. So I would, again, ask why the Premier has done so. Again, if he is not willing to answer the question and state his rationale, then it seems as though it is strictly to jump onto the Nova Scotia government's playbook and, you know, potentially implement that here in Manitoba.

So, again, I'd ask the Premier to explain why he's intervened in this Nova Scotia court case?

**Mr. Pallister:** Previously asked and, well, answered. I will let the member baste in his own juices on that issue as long as he wishes, but I will continue to educate him, in terms of the positive effects of our decisions, in respect of managing the budgetary challenges that we inherited and accepted from previous government.

RBC also did commentary on our budget just three weeks ago. They projected that our deficit would drop to \$521 million from \$726 million projected for '17-18 fiscal, and that that was the largest deficit reduction, one year over the other, in Manitoba history. The deficit, they said, continues to trend lower through the medium term to \$142 million by fiscal year '21-22.

The government is maintaining its commitment to return to balance in second term. This—the sustained improvement is achieved despite a number of tax reductions for both individuals and small businesses contained in Budget 2018. So, you know, very positive comments, and there are many more. I'll continue to share those with the member.

I should also share with the member—he had asked questions earlier about the Manitoba Metis discussions. And I'm looking for that because he had asked me about it, and I didn't want to fail to provide him with the information that he asked me for.

I can tell him that the—no, he had asked, I think—the member will correct me if I'm misrepresenting what he asked. I don't want to do that. I think he had asked why we disagreed with the proposal for Manitoba Hydro board to pay the Manitoba Metis Federation, or something to that effect.

I'll let the member—if he wants to correct me on that, I don't want to answer a question he didn't ask—but I thought that was the question he had asked, I think, two days ago. And I wanted to get back to him with the reasons why.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, I'll return to that subject in due time, in due course. I am still interested in Nova Scotia's Bill 148. So the Premier has talked about, you know, spending \$3,500 out-of-province on a Nova Scotia lawyer. Presumably, that's the \$3,500 that he's referring to, went to that legal firm that went down to the courthouse and indicated that the Manitoba government wanted to be an intervener in this case.

How much more money is the Premier willing to spend on intervening in the Nova Scotia case? Will there be further expenses on this front?

**Mr. Pallister:** Let me say, before I go to the detail he had asked me for on the proposed arrangement with Manitoba Metis Federation, let me respond in this way: how much more hurt is he willing to endure or have others endure while he ignores his responsibilities to work towards ending harassment in this workplace?

How much more pain is he willing to see people endure as a consequence of his unwillingness to do his part to stand and join together with others who are committed to making this a better and safer place to work in? How much longer is he willing to stand aside while people suffer in fear and do nothing, despite his earlier commitments? How much longer will he go on that, and how much does that cost, in



terms of the human aspects that he refuses to address?

\* (11:00)

I will share with him, and I'll assume that my interpretation as asked previously is correct, and I will answer it as I understand it to be, because he has refused to clarify.

But I believe he asked what was the rationale for our decision not to concur with the position taken by the previous Hydro chair and the position in respect of the proposal of the Manitoba Metis?

I'll respond this way. The—there's a discussion document which is still waiting for authorization to release in full from our legal department, but I am told that I can cite the general principles discussed within it.

So the first thing I would say to the member is: as, unfortunately, the head of the Manitoba Metis Federation has communicated that this is in some way a legally binding agreement, provision No. 1 in the discussion document, and it is called a draft discussion document, and it says on the top of the first page: for discussion purposes only.

It says in the document, which is a two-page document, the parties agree to expedite the drafting of a binding legal agreement once this has been agreed to, but that binding legal agreement commitment wouldn't be made if this was a binding legal agreement.

The requirement right in the discussion document is for a binding legal agreement to be developed. There is not one, nor is there a signature on this document from either party, and so any contention that the government of Manitoba is obligated to honour a discussion document is totally false, totally wrong and it is—most certainly not be enforceable in any court.

So the threat that the president of the Manitoba Metis Federation has made to take the Province to court so it will honour a discussion document will not be successful, by any appraisal we have had. That being said, what is represented in this discussion document is a desire to—on the part of Manitoba Hydro, to pay for—pay 37 and a half million dollars in one-time payment followed by an additional 1 and a half million dollars for 20 years for a total of \$67,000,500 and that payment would be—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Chairperson:** The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) is reading from a document, a letter, I'd ask—well, my point of order is that if he's reading from it that he should table it. But I'd ask for your counsel, just for clarity on that.

**An Honourable Member:** On the same point of order, then.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable First Minister.

**Mr. Pallister:** I am most assuredly not reading from any document. I am paraphrasing the points within the agreement that I have cited, which is not anything but a proposal, and I will continue to paraphrase if the member should allow me, or not.

**An Honourable Member:** Just in response to the same point of order.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The Leader of the Official Opposition, on that same point of honour.

**Mr. Kinew:** The Premier did read from the document at several points, including—I think the Hansard record will show—when he made specific reference to the top of the document and read several passages from that point of the document.

**Mr. Chairperson:** I would ask the Premier if he's reading from a private document. I will quote for your reference rule 39, which states where in a debate a member quotes from a private letter any other member may require the member who quoted from the letter to table it.

**Mr. Pallister:** I'm not reading from a private letter.

**Mr. Chairperson:** The Leader of the Official—

**Mr. Kinew:** On a point of order.

**Mr. Chairperson:** On a point of order. We must resolve this point of order until we can make—

**Mr. Kinew:** But weren't we still in the point of order [*inaudible*] discussion?

**Mr. Chairperson:** Yes.

**Mr. Kinew:** Okay, so—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The Leader of the Official Opposition, on that same point of order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Okay. Yes, on the same point of order.

So I would just, again and—you know Hansard, I think, will show this in great clarity, but the Premier (Mr. Pallister) did make specific reference to reading it, to the top of the document, also to other points of the letter. So he is reading it, and so it seems pretty clear that under the rule that he now should table that document.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Well, the Premier has advised me he's not reading from a private document, so I will have to accept the Premier's—the honourable First Minister's word on this. Therefore, I cannot call it a point of order.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, on this same point of order.

**Mr. Kinew:** No, no. I was just going to ask another question.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay. Then, that concludes this.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

**Mr. Kinew:** Always disappointed to lose a point of order, but it is what it is, as they say.

So, again, we were talking about the legal challenge in Nova Scotia that, you know, the Premier's intervened there and they are spending some money. The Premier says it's \$3,500.

*Mr. Andrew Smith, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

We've asked him to intervene in this, you know, quasi-judicial process with the Canadian Transportation Agency. It's a legal challenge trying to get the railway that serves Churchill—trying to get an order by the regulator for railways to say that the rail line should be repaired.

Now, this is a process whereby some legal resources that the province has at its disposal could be marshalled to bring a direct benefit to the people of Churchill, Manitobans but also other Manitobans who live along the rail line and who have been affected by the rail-line closure.

So the point that I would make for the Premier is that assisting us or acting as an intervener or even offering, you know, to join as support in the Canadian Transportation Agency brief, would cost less than what he'd spend in Nova Scotia.

So why doesn't the Premier get involved with a process that will provide something tangible right here in Manitoba when he's already spending money

on these forays into other jurisdictions that are going to impact people in other provinces?

**Mr. Pallister:** I think we should wet our finger and make a mark on the wall. That's the first reference I've heard since the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) became Leader of the NDP to a single suggestion that would save any money, and I thank him for that. That's a—there's a new leaf got turned over just now.

The member says that it would save us money, and I appreciate him, even though I don't agree with him and I don't think his assertion is correct; nonetheless, I appreciate him making a reference to something that would actually save money. That's a new thing for the member, new thing for his party, and I'm just excited to see where this could go.

In respect of the MMF agreement, while he's on the \$3,500 issue, I'll go back to the \$70-million issue. And it's not just the money in this one; it's the principle of things. And I would—again, I would reference—the member says I'm citing from the document; no, I referenced a certain concept raised at the top of the document. It doesn't mean I'm quoting from the document. So I just want to be clear: He's wrong in his assertion on that.

But I will say to him that the proposal—or analysis of the proposal makes it clear that it is not binding, that an agreement—a final agreement is still to be reached. What the agreement does is it proposes, over a term of 50 years, that payments of 67 and a half million dollars would be made plus, after 20 years, 2 per cent of any additional projects Hydro should choose to do within a broad range of categories internal to the province, not inter-provincial projects, international projects but internal to the province of a certain description, that there would be a payment made to the MMF on those.

\* (11:10)

But it goes much further than any other agreement has ever gone. There is no precedent for this aspect of the agreement. In making those payments—those payments are not for use of land, violation of traditional hunting territories, traditional use in terms of practices like picking berries, not for disruption of traditional hunting or fishing grounds, but rather they are an exchange for a release—a release with respect to indigenous rights.

In other words, the Metis people, if this agreement were allowed to go ahead and if the

government was part of it, would be disallowed from participation in things like the Clean Environment Commission hearings or the Public Utilities Board process.

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

They would have to agree with Manitoba Hydro that their project was worthy of support. They would have to support all Hydro projects for 50 years.

Now, this would be like someone entering into an exchange for money, for me to say to the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), how much would you take to agree not to vote for yourself in the next election? And the member to agree with me and accept money would be a sacrifice of principle on the part of the member. That would be clear. And I know the member would not do that.

But this goes further. This says the member for—the member—if I was to ask the member for River Heights, how much would you take for you and your children and grandchildren not to vote in the next election—and that is fundamentally flawed.

To suggest that rights, hard-fought for by the Metis or other groups, should be sacrificed on the altar of a payment for generations to come—fundamentally, this government does not agree with that.

This proposal does not just cover the Manitoba-Minnesota transmission line. It covers unknown projects for 50 years into the future. We can't know what Hydro's projects would all be over a half century. We don't know whether this project that they're agreeing not to object to that they would sign off on goes right through the middle of Duck Bay or St. Laurent or St. Malo or St. Eustache. We can't know that.

And what this purports to do is buy away the right to object to all these projects and let Hydro build them without encumbrance from the Manitoba Metis Federation for a half century. This is unprecedented, unenforceable and, in my mind, unprincipled.

I'll elaborate further. I want the member to understand I am endeavouring to answer his questions as to our reasons for not acquiescing to this proposal that he raised in a previous meeting. And I think it's an important issue, and it is not—I grant him, it's not a \$3,500 issue.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I'm just glancing across the table at my colleague there, and it appears as though he's

reading from a letter or a briefing note rather than—I believe the language he used previously was, a term sheet or some kind of agreement in principle. I forget the exact wording that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) had used there, so I'm not sure if he's got all the information before him.

However, I would direct the Premier to article 10 of the term sheet that the Manitoba Hydro board and Manitoba Metis Federation had arrived at in—I believe it was June of last year. I think that article 10 of that agreement states that, while there is a formula that would—well, sorry. For greater specificity, while the rest of that document outlines that there is a formula that would spell out considerations, benefit sharing, other elements of an agreement that would see benefits, resources and other considerations flow towards the Metis—that article 10 does say that this does not preclude other forms of agreements for existing Hydro projects and does not preclude the fulfillment of the Aboriginal rights of the Metis in those other discussions, which—and again, article 10 spells out that those other discussions would not be precluded by the execution of this agreement.

However, I just wanted to go back to the Premier's previous answer. I believe that article 9 of the document that he's referring to spells out that—well, this is sort of an agreement in principle—that there should be a legal agreement executed within 30 days. I don't know the exact timing of all these conversations. I'm not sure the Premier does either, seeing as how he would not meet with the board chair of Manitoba Hydro.

However, I do believe that that means that there should have been a legal agreement executed as of July 2017. Now, again, bearing in mind that it's my understanding that the agreement in principle—or the term sheet, whatever language we want to use—would have been between the Hydro board and the Metis Federation.

It seems to me that very likely the next step after this agreement in principle was agreed on, that Hydro would have gone back to the Hydro board. So can the Premier confirm that the Hydro board did pass a motion or a resolution or whatever sort of term they would use in their deliberations, to say that they agreed with that term sheet? Did the Hydro board pass a resolution like that last summer?

**Mr. Pallister:** Not to my knowledge, but if the member would like to table the document he's quoting from, I'd appreciate having a look at it.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, I'm just, you know, taking a guess based on what I'm hearing the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said. An educated guess, perhaps, but again, it seems to me that the rationale—you know, the Premier had previously said there would be no legal rationale for a legal challenge against the Province on this matter. And it seems to me that there is a lot of risk both for the Province and for Manitoba Hydro based on the comments that the Premier made in the media after the—almost the entire board of Manitoba Hydro walked out on him.

And, again, you know, just looking at it as an observer, it seemed as though the Premier was trying to change the channel, do some sort of damage control because, again, he did have a very respected member, very prominent member of Manitoba's business community walk out on him and then basically go out into the media and debunk many of the claims the Premier made.

Again, he did have a chunk of the Winnipeg business brain trust on that board also walk out on him. And then it seemed as though, in response, the Premier brought up this agreement with the Metis in an attempt to change the channel.

However, again, the former board chair did say that it was not about this Metis agreement. So again, the questions that are now being raised by the Premier, they seem to pose unnecessary risk to the future of both the Province and Manitoba Hydro.

Again, he's going into a spat with the organization who essentially went to the Supreme Court and got the very Metis rights that the Premier is talking about, and now he says he wants to challenge those things.

So again, for me the question is, the Premier says there's no rationale by which they've been—they might be challenged on this, but it seems to me that if there was an agreement in principle, or there was some sort of term sheet—I forget the exact term that the Premier used—and then such a document went to the Hydro board for its own internal approval, and let's say that the Hydro board did approve it. The Premier says he has no knowledge of it. It seems to me that that would be—have some legal force. And again we know that—what Mr. Riley said in the media. He referred to it as an agreement.

So potentially, Mr. Riley's comments, publicly, would also be admissible and would give greater grounds to the suggestion that potentially this is legally binding, legally enforceable.

So I would ask the Premier: Why has he brought all this unnecessary risk forward just in attempt to change the channel from the problems that he was having with his own mismanagement of the Hydro board?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, I would, as gently as I can, suggest to the member that if he has read the document and he's citing chapter and verse from it, he must have it. And if he has it, he should table it.

\* (11:20)

He's wrong in every other assertion that he's just made. That former chair of Manitoba Hydro said very clearly, as has the head of Manitoba Hydro, that this was not an agreement, that it required ratification by the government, and we have made it clear, having looked at the proposal, and it is just a discussion document, as it has been described by those who know, that we will not agree to this type of concept whereby we purchase the rights away from people for 50 years to participate meaningfully in processes in opposition to hydro projects, if they so desire.

Now, if the member has the document, he should table it. He's been citing from it. He's cited clauses specific to it, and he should table it so we can have a look at it.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the question that I'd initially posed a few days ago, on the subject was—oh, I guess maybe I should mention by way of a preamble that Mr. Riley did refer to this as an agreement. There are examples of him speaking on the record in the media, and he said this is an agreement.

I would also suggest, just to follow up on the rationale, hypothetically, that somebody might use, that when Hydro gets into a situation like this, I believe the act specifies that at their next board meeting, the Chair has to give an update to the board and that such a potential agreement needs to get direction from the board. So it suggests that there probably is some sort of resolution or a vote being held by the Hydro board, so I'd encourage the Premier to, you know, take this as a matter under advisement, ascertain whether there was a vote at the Hydro board, whether there is some sort of resolution that the board passed, and if he could bring that back to us and use that to help us inform some of our discussions here, that might be very helpful.

But, again, the question—so that's just all preamble—the question that I posed initially was, just a short time ago, we heard that the Premier has

requested that there be a meeting between the new Hydro board, the new board appointed as a result of, you know, the old board walking out on the Premier (Mr. Pallister), that this new board be directed to meet with the Manitoba Metis Federation just in this request for a meeting.

My question initially was will the Premier attend this meeting. So I would ask again: Is the Premier going to attend this meeting with the MMF and with Manitoba Hydro, if it is to be arranged, if it can be arranged, I should say?

**Mr. Pallister:** Let the record show the member refuses to table the document that he cites, and that is evidence to me that he hasn't read it, he doesn't know what's in it. He made a previous commitment to make the payment when he was asked by the media. He said he'd pay it. He'd pay the money, but he hadn't read the agreement. He hadn't read the proposal, as it is better described.

So he was willing to sign a cheque not of his own money but of Manitobans' money for more than 67 and a half million dollars because it would also include, over 50 years, 2 per cent of all future hydro projects outside of the first 20, willing to do that without fear or doubt, he's—and also without knowledge of what was in the document, willing to sign a cheque for 67 and a half million dollars, which takes away the rights of Metis people to participate in processes that should be freely available and encouraged to be partaken in by all Manitobans, always, for 50 years, willing to buy away those rights so that Hydro could put a project in wherever it wanted without the Metis people having the right to object. Even if the project went right through the middle of Duck Bay, wouldn't matter. No Metis person, by this discussion document, could object. Further than that, they would have to support, because that's, as I recall, the word in the document, says that the Metis people have to support the project.

This would be, you know, allowing Hydro to pay four of your neighbours to put a hydro expansion in your backyard and just paying them so they don't disagree. That's not right, not fair, disrespects the rights the people fought hard for, and I find it unconscionable, personally, that someone would try to sell those rights away, hard to win. Government of Canada used to do that with First Nations. It was called extinguishment; the member could look it up. It's a practice that ended, and it was right to end it because governments and government agencies used

to require people to sacrifice their rights in exchange for money, give them up. It's not a principled approach to take and it's not one this government will take. The member says he'll take it. It's is disappointing, especially when he hasn't even read the proposed discussion document.

The document's clear in respect of its intentions. Its intentions are to silence the Metis people in respect of Hydro projects for 50 years in exchange for some money. That's the intention. It's not an intention, I think, anyone should be proud of, and I don't agree with it, and our government doesn't agree with it, as is our right. The previous Hydro chair, the member is liking to quote him using the word agreement, also said very, very clearly in the media—it was reported in the CBC, CTV, Free Press and Sun—said, it had to go to government for approval. He said that again and again. He said it in a Globe and Mail article, as well.

The member can do his media search and stop citing things that try to make the case for David Chartrand to get paid more, because he isn't going to get paid more. You're not going to get paid for silence. He can speak. If there's anybody who thinks that I'm going to pay David Chartrand to not make noise, they're wrong. He has every right to do that and, you know, frankly, I think he should, because he should demonstrate to the Metis people they have the right to speak before the Public Utilities Board. They have the right to participate in the Clean Environment Commission.

See, these are things the NDP—you know, it's throwing stones from a glass house, this member, because the NDP took away these rights from Manitobans on things like bipole, the bipole west line. They actually did not include the consideration of the bipole west line in the needs-for-and-alternatives-to analysis that the Clean Environment Commission conducted, which meant that all Manitobans, including Manitoba's Metis, who objected strenuously to their exclusion and their inability to express their opposition to the bipole line going through their traditional territories—they were prohibited from doing so by the previous NDP government. And now, the member says—well, maybe out of a sense of guilt for that past mistake—that he wants to pay \$70 million for something he doesn't even know what he's getting in return.

That's a—not a defensible position, and I would encourage the member not to repeat the arguments that he knows to be false because he knows that the

government has the right to decide to ratify or not ratify proposals that come to it of this nature and a vast array of other proposals as well.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'm not sure that that's accurate, like, anything the Premier (Mr. Pallister) just said.

You know, he did pass, you know, an order through his Cabinet that says, no way, no how; we're not going to do any sort of agreement like this. And, on the next page it says, by the way, this order doesn't apply to any situation like the one that may have been contemplated on the previous page. So it's kind of an odd Cabinet order to look at, because it was like, we're definitely doing this, except in cases where we might do this. So it was kind of interesting, and I suspect maybe he got some legal advice as to why they worded things that way.

But, again, I'd just point out to you, Mr. Chair, that the Premier referred to the document as an agreement in his previous answer. So, again, this is his word, he says this is an agreement with the Metis. I'd suggest to him that there's a few points that, you know, maybe—and maybe he was just using, by way of arguing by an analogy, an imperfect comparison, but there are a few key differences. I think he used the example of people with fee simple property potentially entering into agreements for other people with fee simple property, but I'd remind him that Aboriginal rights and treaty rights are not held individually, they are held collectively.

So there's a bit of a difference in terms of how they're applied and how people might advocate on behalf of them. And it would be the representative group of those holding the Aboriginal with treaty rights that would be able to enter into agreements.

\* (11:30)

The other part of the Premier's understanding that, you know, betrays that he's outside of the mainstream of the current business community's consensus is just the way he characterizes these agreements as being all about the money. Again, impact benefit agreements, generally speaking, other agreements similar to the type that Manitoba Hydro was in discussion with are about building relationships. They're about building relationships between indigenous groups and proponents who are carrying out the duties of the Crown, duties that still rest with the Crown but, procedurally speaking, can be delegated to proponents be they private

corporations or Crown corporations as might be the case here.

So, again, it's about creating a relationship. The relationship may include many considerations. There may be financial considerations as a part of it. There's probably also employment considerations, potentially there are considerations which would outline how you maintain an agreement, what responsibilities either side would have to say potentially, you know, maybe on one side have a liaison, on the other side, you know, to, you know, help ensure that each party can come to the table and continue to maintain the relationship set out in an impact benefit agreement in some sort of other agreement.

So, again, that seems to be the consensus that, you know, the business community across the country has arrived at that this is, you know, how reconciliation in a corporate context, reconciliation in a resource industry context, reconciliation in other contexts in which businesses engage can move forward by having agreements, by contemplating many things in those agreements.

So, when the Premier looks at this as strictly being, you know, a money thing, he is missing the point, I think. He's missing the point about what the relationship-building exercise is all about, and he betrays that he's considerably outside the mainstream of the Canadian business consensus. It's not surprising. It's the same sort of mentality that the Premier takes on a lot of issues. It's all about the money. He doesn't have room for anything beyond that scope.

So, again, the question was about a meeting, and now that the Premier has requested that there be a meeting between the different parties potentially affected by this agreement, the question was will the Premier attend such a meeting. The Premier did not answer that question. He can do so again, but I would ask: Did the parties previously request a meeting prior to the board walking out? Did they request a meeting to discuss these issues?

**Mr. Pallister:** Asked and answered.

The member asserts a number of things that are false, and so I would say to him a proposed agreement is—*[interjection]*—important for—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —the member to understand.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order. I would like to again remind the committee that using the word false—we've discussed it the other day—I would ask us to be very careful with the words we choose.

**Mr. Pallister:** Is phony okay?

**An Honourable Member:** I'll allow it.

**Mr. Pallister:** Phony assertions, then.

What the member is trying to do here is make the case that there's a precedent. There isn't. He then goes on and talks about well-established agreements, understood, well understood, for compensation for incursions into traditional land and territories and so on and so forth, as if those were the same thing as this proposal. They are not. This is unheard of. This is a radical departure. He then claims falsely that it's all about the money and that I'm making it about the money. I'm making it about the rights—I'm making it about the rights.

The member has to ask himself: Would he take \$10,000 to not object to a hydro project going through his land, or would his price be a little higher? How high would it be? He has to ask himself: Would he sell his rights. He has to ask himself that question. The answer is yes. Shame on him. It might be yes, I don't know. He said he'd sign a \$70-million agreement without reading it. So maybe the answer is yes. But the answer from this government is no. The answer is no because it's inappropriate.

So my concerns—our government's concerns are about an unprecedented arrangement that's being proposed to purchase away the rights of people who deserve to have those rights. Now, this proposal, and it is just a proposal, outlines a payment of—it would be well in excess of \$70 million over a 50-year period. Assuming Hydro was to build something, they would have to pay 2 per cent to the MMF, so the MMF members would be quiet. And he defends that. He defends agreements that pay people to be quiet. And then on the other hand, he talks about building relationships. How do you build a relationship with people you pay to be quiet? How's that work? How's that a relationship?

The member and I have our disagreements, but I would never, ever offer to pay him for his silence because then that would be a sacrifice of principle on both our parts. He wouldn't be allowed to express his concerns about things we're doing. How could he do his job?

Now, you could argue, well, that would be in your best interests, though, because you could buy silence from him, and then you'd be in a better position. And that's—that, in essence, is the Hydro argument on this side of this deal.

But how does that build a relationship? How does that make us stronger as people? How does that help the Metis people in years to come when a project is proposed that they take strong exception to? They would have to agree to it because they had taken money negotiated some 30, 40, 50 years before.

It's illogical. The member shouldn't defend it. The member should reflect on how hard it is for people to get rights and how hard it is they've struggled to get those rights and then not enter into a discussion about trying to buy them away. And he should not support the selling of them either.

This proposal has always required the approval of the government. Every party at the table, we are told, knew that all the way along, so he should not try to stoke the Manitoba Metis legal fees as a consequence of adding fuel to the contention—false contention that there is any merit in the argument that this is a deal of any kind. It is not. It is a proposal, and we fundamentally disagree with it.

I'll share with the member that there are many Metis people—and I will cite from just a snippet of the correspondence that I've received, which is significant, from Manitoba Metis people who are strongly, strongly opposed to this, who have told our MLAs, in significant numbers, they do not want to be part of such an arrangement. But this is a—oh, I'll share it with the member in a moment then.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Kinew:** I'd begin by asking a rhetorical question of the Premier (Mr. Pallister). How do you build relationships with people if you do not respect their right to self-determination? That is a rhetorical question, meaning I'm posing it, and you don't need to hit the talk button there, Mr. Chair.

And it seems to me that, you know, the Metis Federation's a representative organization. They have, in exercising their right to self-determination in the past, gone to the Supreme Court; through the Daniels decision, established some of their rights. Other court cases established more of their rights. Previous generations of Metis leadership, both from Manitoba and elsewhere, were successful in getting

Metis rights included in the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution.

So, again, it's a question of self-determination, and it seems to me that if an organization that represents the Metis nation, in exercising their right to self-determination, comes to an agreement, then, you know, that should be respected as an indication of their exercising of their right to self-determination.

On the flip side, if, you know, there's a Crown entity that negotiates what, I believe, the former board chair, somebody who would have been somebody that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) sought to curry favour with previously, likely sought to receive donations from prior to the last election, somebody who I'm sure the Premier was very upset to have go out in public against him—but that chair—former chair, I should say, said that this agreement made sense both from, you know, a moral and legal perspective, but also from a financial perspective.

So you have a multi-party agreement on the nature of what was proposed there 'til, of course, it comes to light that the Premier is mismanaging Hydro and he's unwilling to take a meeting with the board chair to discuss other issues. So, the Premier was unwilling to discuss other issues with the board chair and the rest of the former Manitoba Hydro board, issues that were highlighted as being critical in nature, issues that were about the finances and about the governance of Manitoba Hydro.

And, by the way, Mr. Chair, for greater clarity, the outgoing board chair said that this—explicitly, the breakdown in communication—was not about the Metis agreement.

\* (11:40)

So, again, here we have the Premier trying to change the channel when he creates a problem for himself. So it's odd to hear the Premier get riled up, though, I guess, perhaps, when he does so, he believes that it will show greater conviction and help in the efficacy of his attempt to change the channel from the lack of a working relationship that he had with his own self-appointed board members on Manitoba Hydro.

But, again, that's all just a preamble. I'd ask the Premier whether Hydro or the MMF had requested a meeting with the Province previous to the request that was issued through the media by the Province, I believe it was last week. So they issued that request through the media, I think it was last week, for these

parties to come together. But had those other parties previous to that requested a meeting with the minister responsible for Hydro or requested a meeting with the Premier to discuss these issues?

**Mr. Pallister:** The member speaks about me getting riled up. I have a record of keeping pretty good control of myself when I relate to other people and work with other people. And—

**An Honourable Member:** Many of your MLAs are looking at you when you say that.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, it's a record that I can put up against the member's own record in terms of his conduct in dealing with conflict situations. I'll tell him that. And, if he wants to use innuendo against me, I welcome that, but I have facts to use against him if he wants to go down that road. I haven't chosen to go down that road, so I'd encourage the member to be careful in impugning the integrity of me or anyone else.

In terms of extinguishment, the member seems to not understand the delicacy of the—

**An Honourable Member:** Touchy.

**Mr. Pallister:** Yes, yes. Exactly. Exactly. The member says he's touchy.

**An Honourable Member:** No, no. You are.

**Mr. Pallister:** He's right to be. With his record, he has a right to be touchy about that issue. Talking about me getting riled up. Wow. Interesting.

Look, I get riled up when people try to take rights away from underprivileged people or people who are in minority situations who have difficulty obtaining their rights. I get riled up. I care about that. I wish the member would demonstrate more of an understanding or a real compassion towards people who are in situations, like those who are harassed in our workplace, who need to be protected and deserve to be protected. But he doesn't. He just does it in press release and in press interview, and then nothing follows. Empty and vacuous, that's the approach on that.

So, if you want to protect people, do it. Don't talk about doing it. This government's very, very cognizant of the circumstances that would be faced by Metis people for up to half a century in terms of their ability, sacrificed ability, to oppose a Hydro project.

Now, we're seeing with this the pipelines right now, too. You know, there's no perfect process, but



there's a process. And we need to agree to respect it. And people—there are people on the side of wanting to advance projects and traditionally have advanced them through private land and through traditional lands of the Metis and traditional lands of First Nations and have pushed those projects through and have sacrificed the rights of those people along the route, whether pipeline or Hydro line, water projects, and have done that, while sacrificing the rights of others in the process. That's not right. There are those on the side of advancing those projects who would say, no, let's just pay the people off and get them to be quiet and agree to it, and then we can continue to do these projects the way we want to do them. And some in BC right now feel that that's the process that—that's the behaviour of a certain pipeline organization.

Others on the other side say, you know, we need to get this project done; it's good for people economically, et cetera, et cetera.

Okay. So we can agree and we have different points of view. Therefore, what we need is a process people can agree to, a process that allows people to express their views, to be heard, a respectful process that lets people object. And how would that process work if we started paying people not to? How would it work?

For example, we have a group of farmers in southeast Manitoba that are all going to be impacted by the Manitoba-Minnesota transmission line. Part of the reason they're going to be impacted is that the route was changed. The route was moved off Crown land so as not to impinge on traditional uses and traditional rights of Metis and First Nations people.

That was a decision made, a recommendation taken, by the Clean Environment Commission when they did their analysis. They listened to everyone. They had a difficult task. They heard from everyone. And then they decided, okay, we'll recommend a route that goes about 20 of the miles of the whole line, 20, go through some Crown land. And that's the basis for the part of this agreement not—proposed agreement—not defined, but that's the basis for the compensation in part, though it's not stipulated how much of the \$70 million goes for land, the 20 miles, and how much is for rights sacrificed.

Now, imagine, back up a second, if this process had been undertaken without the rights of Metis to come before the Clean Environment Commission, if they had not been allowed to come and say, we object, this is not right, where would the line have

gone? Would it have gone totally through Crown land? Would it have gone more than 20 miles through Crown land? And, if your answer is, I don't really know, but probably, because you wouldn't have heard from the Metis people about that line because they wouldn't have been able to object to it, then you've got to see the logic of not allowing this kind of model to be followed in the future, because the Metis people wouldn't have been allowed to participate and object to that line, and it might well have infringed on a lot of their land and a lot of their traditional use would've been infringed upon. That's not right.

**Mr. Kinew:** So it's—it is—there is a problem with logic at this committee, but the—that entire—that entirely rests on the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) side. He's making the argument that the Crown fulfilling its duty to consult and accommodate with an Aboriginal group represents a violation of the duty to consult and accommodate with an Aboriginal group.

So it's just a further illustration that the Premier is far outside of the mainstream, not only of contemporary, you know, business leaders and where they're at with the duty to consult and reconciliation more generally, but also with the legal theory around the duty to consult, he's far outside the mainstream. And, you know, I hesitate to say that he's sort of just making it up as he goes along to serve his own political ends, but it seems increasingly like that.

But, again, the question was: Did Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation request a meeting recently, prior to this press-released request for a meeting that happened last week? Had they requested a meeting to discuss these issues recently?

**Mr. Pallister:** This is hilarious because what the member just did is he purports to have some expertise or information about the duty to consult and at the same time supports the right of people to not consult at all. In fact, he's actually saying that we should sign this agreement. He's said that, that this proposal should be recognized as a first of its kind, you know, that it should be entered into because it's a great thing, and what the proposal does is take away the right to consult and object to projects. And the member also says he's for the duty to consult. So he's for both the duty to consult and he's also defending a proposal that buys away the opportunity to consult—can't have it both ways.

You know, if you want a process to work, you've got to encourage people to participate in it; that's true of any process. And what the Leader of the

Opposition is doing, is he's actually exhibiting the same behaviour as his predecessor, who was attacked by his colleagues in a rebellion for not being willing to listen and consult at all. I love it when he talks about disharmony; he's an expert on that. His party certainly is an expert on that with their six different sects and their divisions within their ranks. So he understands about conflict, I get that.

But what he fails to understand and accept is there absolutely is not unanimity among the Metis people in Manitoba as to their willingness to have this real, important right to object to a Hydro project or any other kind of project taken away from them.

Here's—this is a letter I can table for the member because I will read it: I have read with shock and surprise recent reports from the Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. was attempting to enter into a \$70-million agreement with Manitoba Hydro that would purchase the consent of the Metis people for the construction of the Manitoba-Minnesota transmission line. To say that reports of a \$70-million deal between David Chartrand and Manitoba Hydro have come as a shock to our people is an understatement. I have heard rumours and allusions to such a deal, but its size and duration go far beyond what anyone would've reasonably contemplated.

\* (11:50)

I was surprised by the deal because Manitoba Hydro is well aware that David Chartrand is not legally able to represent all Metis people in Manitoba, nor is he able to sell the consent of our people either today or for that of future generations.

The MMF constitution and membership criteria exclude many Metis persons in Manitoba from becoming MMF members, including many direct descendants of original Metis families who were entitled to lands under The Manitoba Act, 1870. I say this as the current president of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of Manitoba, a member of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and as a former MMF president. I have serious concerns about the secrecy regarding the negotiation of this agreement and in particular the fact that groups such as mine, groups that represent Metis people here in Manitoba, were not included or even consulted.

Even worse, the fact that there appears to be no oversight of the activities of the MMF or any financial accounting for the money it has already received from Manitoba Hydro over the years.

It goes on to express concerns. This is from Ernie Blais, president of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of Manitoba, and it concludes by saying David Chartrand does not speak for me and he does not speak for all the Metis people in Manitoba.

So, you know, the member claims that he would give \$70 million out and that he would do it on the basis that it's fine to sell rights and buy rights of people 50 years into the future, and we just don't agree with that, you know. So this was a source of concern for our government when we received the proposal. We researched it, we reflected upon it, we looked at it, and we made a decision as a government that we will not enter into this proposal.

The member says he would. The member says he supports the idea, but it wouldn't be the first time that motivations of the NDP were to buy influence or to buy votes, so I would suggest that, on reflection, it's pretty clear that the member would rather buy votes than respect rights.

**Mr. Chairperson:** If the First Minister is tabling that document, did you request that we should make copies of it?

**Mr. Pallister:** I'm not tabling it unless somebody wants me to table it. I can table it if you want.

**Mr. Kinew:** On reflection, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) does not represent me, and he certainly does not represent the views of all Manitobans.

I just wanted to, again, ask the question: Did the Manitoba Metis Federation and Manitoba Hydro request a meeting to discuss these issues prior to April 7th?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, the member says I don't represent him, and I don't purport to, but I am in a position where I have to make decisions based on what I feel are in the best interests of Manitobans—all Manitobans, and so I would hope the member would understand I would never, ever offer to pay him to be quiet. I'm too entertained by his speaking ability, and I would, frankly, fundamentally disagree with any proposal that he might make to offer to give up his rights in exchange for money. I don't think that that would be fair or principled.

I would say it would go along the lines of extinguishment, and it's something that the member should understand. A general definition of the extinguishment of rights is just—is simple: It's the taking away or the surrendering of rights, and the

practice of extinguishment of indigenous rights is no longer employed and would be unacceptable by modern standards. Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 provides additional protections against extinguishment.

Douglas Eyford is a noted constitutional expert. He wrote a document called *A New Direction: Advancing Aboriginal and Treaty Rights*, published in April of 2015, and in there, he said Section 35 was enacted as part of the Canadian constitution in 1982. Before 1982, Aboriginal rights existed and were recognized under the common law, but because they did not have constitutional status they were vulnerable to extinguishment or regulation by legislation.

Since the enactment of section 35, Aboriginal rights cannot be extinguished. Kent McNeil, extinguishment—[interjection]

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, order. The honourable First Minister has the floor. I'd appreciate it that he answers the question.

**An Honourable Member:** I apologize, yes. [interjection]

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable First Minister.

**Mr. Pallister:** Thank you. I accept the member's apology because in making light of the issue of extinguishment he makes light of the importance of rights for people, and it's not something we take lightly.

Another academic on this issue, Kent McNeil, wrote in February 2002 on the extinguishment of Aboriginal title in Canada, treaties, legislation, judicial discretion—noted, moreover, since the enactment of the constitution act of 1982, which recognized and affirmed Aboriginal and treaty rights, Aboriginal title has been constitutionally protected.

So we take that seriously. It goes on to say—Mr. McNeil says—and he's a respected gentleman in this area of study—the constitutional 'entrenchment' of Aboriginal—entrenchment of Aboriginal title and other Aboriginal and treaty rights in 1982 has meant they are no longer subject to legislative extinguishment, even by Parliament.

To us, purchasing away the rights of people to participate in processes which, frankly, only work if people participate in them, is wrong. It would weaken the ability of the Public Utilities Board to make honest and astute judgments, because it would lose the valuable input of the Metis people of

Manitoba. It would weaken the ability of the Clean Environment Commission to do its work to make recommendations, which were disrespected, in fact, by the previous administration, who brought the Keyask proposal to the Clean Environment Commission so late that they had actually built the thing before it was approved.

And the reason it was approved by the Clean Environment Commission was for that very reason: that the money had already been sunk into the project to such a degree that there was no point in rejecting it, that it was too late.

So they say justice delayed is justice denied. We would say trying to pay people not to participate in these processes is wrong. Fundamentally, we don't agree with it. The member says he does. So I respect his right to disagree, and I won't pay him not to disagree. And he needs to understand that about this government.

**Mr. Kinew:** The Premier (Mr. Pallister)—you know, I saw the look of realization spread across his face as he got to the end of the paragraph he was reading about the legal scholars talking about extinguishment. And presumably, the realization that he had is that Manitoba Hydro is not able to extinguish Aboriginal and treaty rights despite the fact that he's trying to use that legal concept here. It's not something that Manitoba Hydro would be able to do in an agreement.

But again, the question that I would ask again for the minister to—or, for the First Minister, rather, to answer is: Did Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation ask for a meeting prior to April 7th?

**Mr. Pallister:** So the member just makes my point for me. He has just proclaimed loud and clear that Manitoba Hydro doesn't have the right to extinguish the rights of people to participate in processes and that—if they don't have that right, I guess the fundamental question I have to ask him is: Why does he support signing the agreement with purports to take away those rights? If it's not a valid process, then why would he sign—why would he give \$70 million to somebody to not participate in a process that they retain the right to? Doesn't make any sense.

So, if he's right in his assertion—and I don't dispute that he may be, then why have such a proposal brought forward? Why pay \$70 million to people who maintain their right to participate?

If he's right in that assertion, why play the game of paying money to the Manitoba Metis Federation to buy such rights away from people for 50 years into the future? How is that logical on a principled basis? How is that logical on a financial basis? How is that logical on any basis?

**Mr. Kinew:** There is no extinguishment clause in any agreement that Hydro could enter into. There is a legal definition to that. That's the point that I'm making.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) is ducking and diving and dodging the question that I've asked. Presumably, there's something in the answer to that question that makes him uncomfortable and he does not want to put on the record.

So I'd ask again if Hydro and the Metis Federation had requested a meeting prior to April 7th. And, if the Premier dodges the question again, I'll be forced to conclude that, yes, they did ask for a meeting, and it was the Premier's refusal to meet that was the real issue here.

So, again, I would ask: Did Hydro and the Metis Federation ask for a meeting to discuss the term sheet—or, the agreement, as the Premier had said, prior to April 7th?

**Mr. Pallister:** The ducking and dodging that's going on at this table is the swift sound, the deft ability of the Leader of the Opposition to ignore his responsibilities to protect the safety of the people who work in the government of Manitoba by releasing his internal study around harassment in his party.

\* (12:00)

He condemned the previous leader, called on him to resign. I'd like to see those documents, so I can cite from them. He called on him to resign on the basis that he was not fulfilling and had not fulfilled his responsibilities to protect the people of his staff and his party. He said that the NDP did not deserve to win the last election because of their mishandling of this harassment issue, and yet he refuses to release a study that he did internally, commissioned internally, to let the steam off the pot, so to speak, of the pressure that was on him in regard to the mishandled misconduct of the previous minister of Finance and other portfolios, the former MLA for Dauphin. He said it was a failure of leadership. He attacked Greg Selinger, demanded he resign. He told him he shouldn't have press conferences.

And that continued—that was a continuation of previous behaviour he demonstrated in disrespecting the man who stood by him—stood by him when he was under attack for his conduct, previous conduct in terms of things like tweets and rap lyrics and things like this. And the premier at that time stood by the member, took the hit, was loyal to him at I'm sure a difficult time for the premier in respect of other issues as well, having just endured a rebellion by a half dozen of his own caucus. I mean, he had to face that after leading the NDP to the largest number of seats they'd ever captured in a provincial election. The member, the candidate then for Fort Rouge, was being criticized for past conduct, and Greg Selinger stood beside him. That demonstrated a certain amount of character, I think.

But then in an interview right after becoming leader, I believe the phrase that the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) used was, it's time for Greg to go. Right away throw him under the bus. And then a phrase was used in another interview: yesterday's man, he said. So much for loyalty. So much for honourable conduct.

And then this comes up, this Stan Struthers episode, and he says—the member for Fort Rouge says, I'm very disappointed in the NDP. We're supposed to be the party that protects the vulnerable. As of a couple of months ago, I guess things changed. He says, I don't doubt the veracity of anything reported so far. There was a cult of looking the other way, a permissiveness.

How did that change? How has that changed? How has that culture of concealment changed? We're taking steps, we're dealing with this issue as a government. But we need everybody: each political party, each political organization. And I've appreciated the support of the Liberal caucus members in respect of this. They take this issue seriously. But I'd like the opposition leader to do the same and not cover it up. Don't continue this culture of concealment that got these types of situations not just into the news, I mean, but had them happen in the first place. That's what we're trying to prevent going forward, and, you know, the member hasn't—he's had ample opportunity to demonstrate the courage of his convictions. He says he's disappointed in the NDP when it's someone else he can blame. But when it's his responsibility, he just absolutely refuses to take that responsibility seriously, and that's—that is extremely disappointing, I think, to those of us who care about a safer workplace for all here.

**Mr. Kinew:** So they did request a meeting prior to April 7th. Manitoba Hydro and the Manitoba Metis Federation, one or the other, perhaps both, did request a meeting prior to April 7th. That's what it seems like based on the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) refusal to answer.

So, if they did request a meeting to discuss an issue that the Premier clearly has a lot of thoughts about—misguided thoughts, albeit, but thoughts nonetheless—why wouldn't he take the meeting with them?

**Mr. Pallister:** Let the record show, and let me restate, that what the member has just said is that our concern as a government with protecting the rights of the Metis people to participate in processes that they deserve to participate in, like the Public Utilities Board and the Clean Environment Commission, that we are defending their right to participate in those processes, that we are defending their responsibility to participate in those processes, not just in support of what comes before the Public Utilities Board, or the Clean Environment Commission or any other processes, but in opposition to it, as well, that we respect their right to do that; every Manitoban has that right. Let the record show the member's just described that willingness to defend those rights as misguided.

What is misguided is the member's willingness to support taking away those rights, subtracting them from people for 50 years into the future. It's not just his willingness to sign a check for a proposal he hasn't even read; that in itself is disappointing, I think, to any Manitoban. But it is his willingness to now say that it is misguided to try to protect those rights, that is exactly what we're focused on doing for all Manitobans, whether we agree with them or not.

And so the member makes assertions that are false and, again, his commitment to inaction on improving the work environment for all people who work here is disappointing, to say the least. CBC did an investigation. Seven women—including former NDP ministers—have accused Stan Struthers of inappropriate touching. Seven. And Greg Selinger went out and he apologized, and the member will need to do the same thing if he's not careful, because if this continues, or if later, things come to light and there was an investigation conducted under his watch—he took great credit for announcing it; he likes his take-offs, but he doesn't like his landings much—if something comes to light in respect of this, he'll wear

it. And he should simply go clean right now and go public and say there's something or there's nothing, whatever. He has the opportunity to be frank and forward on this issue rather than being deceptive. And I encourage him in this.

It's not just because I'm the father of two daughters that I care about this issue. I care about it for all. Men and women in our government, who work in the civil service, who work in Crowns, work in the so-called MUSH sector in municipalities and so on, deserve to feel secure in their work environment, and they deserve to feel respected, and they deserve to feel listened to and they deserve to feel totally, totally safe all the time. And that requires all of us, not just some of us. And the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) is sadly not willing to be one of those who stands up and defends a safer workplace.

**Mr. Kinew:** It seems as though the Premier has established that there was a request to meet to discuss these issues from the Manitoba Metis Federation or from Hydro.

Again, I would ask the question: Why wouldn't the Premier meet to discuss those issues?

**Mr. Pallister:** Yes, yes, yes. So the member continues to avoid his obligations in respect of this.

I have clearly answered his question previously, and I'll tell—I'll share with him that the Public Utilities Board is an important body and, despite the willingness of the NDP in the past to disrespect the functioning of the Public Utilities Board and the Clean Environment Commission, he clearly doesn't understand their importance or their key role in determining the viability or the advisability of going forward with projects in our province.

The PUB's an independent, quasi-judicial administrative tribunal. And there are three ways in which the public can participate in the hearings: as an intervenor, as a presenter, as an interested citizen. What the proposal tries to do is take away those rights—or, sacrifice those rights for the next 50 years and say you have to support what comes before the PUB. That we don't agree with and we don't think is right.

\*(12:10)

So barring interested citizens from participating in a process is not on. That's not what we're about, and we won't be. Same with the Clean Environment Commission. The public can participate in the decision-making process. It was established under

The Environment Act in 1988. It's an avenue for the public participation. That's what it was set up to do, and it is—the idea there, of course, is to allow people who have concerns to come forward and to participate. Right on their website, it says, our principal role is to provide opportunities for the Manitoba public to play a part in ensuring the protection of our environment.

So, again, how can we do that? How can we have a Clean Environment Commission that works if we disallow people from being able to participate in its process, if we tell them, you know, you can play a part, but you have to support the project? How's that work for everybody else? How would that work with the—just that recent project here, the Manitoba-Minnesota transmission line, if people didn't participate because they were paid not to? How would the process work to protect everyone else? Maybe individuals, you know, quieter voices, would they get the support they needed as a group like the Manitoba Metis Federation, purporting to represent a significant number of people, that's not participating? Wouldn't that de-emphasize the points made by smaller groups like the few farmers who live along that route or an individual who has a concern about a certain issue? Would serve to weaken their position there. Would make them less able to, frankly, achieve their goal in terms of their participation because there will be a de-emphasis on the point that they were trying to make.

And how does this work and what is the implication for other projects elsewhere? Not just Hydro projects, but other projects like the outlet-Lake Manitoba outlet proposal, that is so important to the people of that basin who have sacrificed so much for so long to protect people downstream, including the people who live in the city of Winnipeg and surrounding communities. How would the process work if we carry this further? This concept the member seems to support might go further than if he—do we pay the Manitoba Metis Federation not to participate in the hearings on the Lake Manitoba outlet? Buy their unwillingness to be part of that process in some way by compensating them? How does that help the others who live around the basin who are trying to be heard? How does that support them?

So these are processes that are there to protect people. We are concerned that, in withdrawing numbers of Manitobans from the process, we make the process less viable, less effective at doing the things it's designed to do, and continue to assert that

people should—all Manitobans should have the right to use these processes as citizens of our province, collectively, individually. They should have that right, and we'll defend that right.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has made it clear that he did not want to meet with them. Didn't have a reason, but did not want to meet.

But why didn't he direct the minister responsible to meet with the Metis Federation or Hydro to discuss these issues?

**Mr. Pallister:** The meetings the member alludes to have taken place, will continue to take place, are numerous in nature. And I would expect that, apart from the possible frequency of meetings with the Liquor & Lotteries board chair—and by meetings I would include, also, contacts such as—take various forms.

But I would say the interaction between—of 180 agencies, boards, commissions, there's only, I'd say, Liquor & Lotteries would've had more interaction, more contact, more communication than Hydro. Ongoing, regular, consistent, not always in agreement, obviously, that's what the member is focusing on, the disagreement point, but very effective ongoing communication by the ministers, by myself and our office with our key boards and agencies and commissions, and that is the responsibility of ministers, and that is the responsibility our ministers have fulfilled very well.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, Wes can exhale now.

So there's a 2014 agreement between the Hydro and—I should say the Hydro-Electric Board and the MMF that the Province is a party to as well, believe it's called the Kwaysh-kin-na-mihk la paazh Agreement. It's referred to as Turning the Page agreement also. Basically sets out a framework for engaging between those different organizations, and it says that, you know, those parties can ask for a meeting to resolve disputes or, you know, issues that lack clarity and, you know, that a request could be made under that agreement to bring those parties together.

It seems to me that in order to fulfill the agreement that if a meeting's requested that it should be arranged. And, you know, it seems as though, you know, the Premier is telling us today that there was a request for a meeting, and seems as though that request for a meeting should've been honoured. Seems as though it was not. The Premier is citing, you know, meetings between the minister

responsible and other Crown agencies but has not pointed to any specific meeting. But then on April 7th, the minister comes out and says, oh, we've got to have a meeting now.

So I'm just wondering, why now? Why would there be a need to meet now but not earlier on?

**Mr. Pallister:** That'd be self-evident, I think.

**Mr. Kinew:** Maybe we could just copy and paste this exchange from earlier on when we were having the same one on a different topic, but can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) tell us why it would be self-evident?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, because there's a disagreement.

**Mr. Kinew:** So the implication of that is that this disagreement arose in the days leading up to April 7th, correct?

**Mr. Pallister:** Can't be sure of that. What I am sure of is that there's a request to meet and that that request's being dealt with appropriately. So that's how we deal with these things. We haven't paid anybody to not have a meeting or agree to not have a meeting based on a payment we would make. We've decided that we would behave appropriately by having a meeting and having a discussion. That's how relationships are built, I think, more than paying people not to come to a meeting, which the member has previously stated he's in favour of, by the way. We're not, but he is.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I'm assuming that when he says there's a meeting request that he's talking about the public request for a meeting that the minister made on April 7th.

Can the First Minister confirm that that's what he's referring to, or is he now confirming that there was an earlier request for a meeting from one of the other parties in the Turning the Page agreement, or the Kwaysh-kin-na-mihk la paazh Agreement.

**Mr. Pallister:** We were the first government to set up—I'm so interested in establishing better oversight of Crown corporations, we actually decided to have a minister in charge of that, and we do, and that minister can answer questions about meetings, get-togethers of various kinds in Estimates. I'll let the minister do his job.

\* (12:20)

**Mr. Kinew:** So why won't the Premier tell us that—whether or not there was a meeting? Again, previously, it was left unchallenged that there had been a meeting request. Now the minister says, oh,

you've got to deal with that at another Estimates table. I'm just very curious to know: Why wouldn't the Premier just tell us? Just tell us what had, in fact, happened. Was there a request for a meeting prior to April 7th? Seems like a pretty straightforward question, could get a straightforward answer. Can the Premier tell us whether there was a request for either of the parties—the other parties, I should say, for greater clarity, that were part of that 2014 agreement—can the Premier tell us whether there was a request under those—of those other parties under that agreement prior to April 7th?

**Mr. Pallister:** So, in terms of these sexual harassment allegations that the member doesn't want to address, he has said, and I'm not sure of—I think this is Canadian Press. So, the member can say if he didn't say these things, but it seems like he did, that he—I'm very disappointed with the NDP. We are supposed to be the party that protects the vulnerable. Our party deserved to lose the last election. We lost sight of what was right. It was a failure of leadership. These comments were made after a number of women came forward, some of them having been silent for years, and reported inappropriate, unwanted touching by the former member for Dauphin. And they said that the party brass told them to suck it up and that they took no action. And now the member is taking no action again.

So this was two months ago or so and nothing since. One former Cabinet minister of the NDP said that she was touched inappropriately and that the former member for Dauphin was crafty about it, I think, were her words. I didn't know he was doing it to other people. I only found out when I was going to an announcement, and a person said, I won't let you get into a vehicle with him. And then she realized that she wasn't the only one, then.

See, this—that's what happens, eh, with this culture of concealment, that people don't—they're afraid to speak up. They don't say what's happened to them because they're afraid of reprisals, or they're concerned that maybe the person that they're—that they were dealing with is in a position of power and they could be hurt by their frankness, hurt by their honesty. This went on for years.

In this article, the NDP leader today—of today says he hasn't spoken to Stan Struthers about this at all. Has he now spoken to Stan Struthers or has he not?

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, those are some very, you know, disturbing details. I don't relish hearing them.

But, again, I was asking the Premier (Mr. Pallister), if there hasn't been a meeting or a response to that request for a meeting, why the urgency now? Why wouldn't the Premier meet with the other parties to that 2014 agreement that has some sort of contemplation of, like, a—maybe not a formal dispute resolution process but does have some sort of, you know, framework for which he might be able to come together and resolve disputes or areas where there's not clarity?

Why has the Premier now found it urgent; whereas, previously, he didn't—he lacked the impetus, apparently, to come to the table and have these discussions?

**Mr. Pallister:** I've got to say to the member, when he says he doesn't relish hearing them and yet he's unwilling to take any action, he's at risk of repeating the practices of the past that led to the repetition of these kinds of behaviours.

He doesn't like hearing them. His predecessor didn't like hearing them either. His former chief of staff didn't like hearing them, told people to suck it up and be quiet about it. That's the problem. It's a culture of concealment. The member makes my point for me. He doesn't like hearing about this, but he needs to hear about it.

And look, I've got to be clear. I'm not referencing his behaviour in the past or—I'm not proud of things I've done in the past. I've got to change my behaviours. He and I are both knowing that, as people, we have to change our behaviours. But one of the behaviours we've got to change is this culture of concealment.

We've got to change that, and the member has an opportunity here that he's passing up on that he shouldn't. He shouldn't think about himself here. He shouldn't be thinking about his political party. I'm hoping he can set those things back—on the back burner.

I've told our political staff that you report any incident. You don't have to go to the chief of staff, you don't have to go internal, you go—just, no wrong door. You go; you report it. And our MLAs know they're not more important.

I respect their willingness—the willingness of the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and all the members of the NDP and the Liberals who were elected, and I respect the people who put their name on the ballot and didn't get elected, too, but putting your name on a ballot and getting elected doesn't

make you more important than the staff that you work with. It doesn't.

And this—I know the member doesn't like me harping on this, but I have to, because it is something we've got to change, and we can't do it without the co-operation of the NDP.

When a former Cabinet minister says she's afraid to raise an issue like this, that's got to tell you something. Like, this is not right.

And, for women to have to bear the memory of this for years before they could summon up the courage to actually bring this forward, for the member to realize—they must realize that for several of these women, they had suppressed this and had not said anything about it until they saw that someone else stood up and said, that was wrong. That happened to me. When they had that example, then they were emboldened by that.

The member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) is an influential man and a well-spoken, intelligent man. And he has the opportunity now to use this influence that he has, this position of power he has, for good. And he should do that, because his example, it could be striking to others.

His willingness to say, you know, to his MLAs, to everyone, that our staff can report this to anyone—haven't heard that, haven't heard that from the member. And this investigative committee, he said he'd—he took action immediately when this issue was at its peak, in terms of news coverage.

He said he would immediately appoint a commission, led by women, people who are beyond reproach, to investigate the allegations, make recommendations on policy changes, et cetera, et cetera. Recommendations would be made public.

Good. Good. Let's get at it. I am the leader of the NDP now. The buck stops with me. The old politics are dead. Doing the right thing should always come before politics. Hallelujah, brother. So let's do the right thing. Let's not cover up this investigative analysis.

As I said earlier to him, if there's nothing to show, good. That's great. That'll give confidence that there is a change starting here and that people can be treated with respect here and feel safe here. And the parents and grandparents of these workers who we hire and employ here, who we—whose work we value, they will feel more confident, and they will not worry about the safety of their sons or daughters.



And, if there is something, I want to assure the member, this is not an attempt, by me or anyone else, to make this politics—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The hour being 12:30 p.m., committee rise.

### FAMILIES

\* (10:00)

**Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply is now considering the Estimates for the Department of Families.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families):** Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I'm pleased to present the highlights of the 2018-19 Department of Families budget.

Budget 2016 provides \$60.5 million in new funding for the department over the Budget 2017, which represents a close to 3 per cent increase over last year's fiscal year. This funding will be used to help Manitoba families and communities by improving the supply and quantity of affordable housing, by addressing shortage of child-care spaces and providing support for vulnerable children and adults.

The department budget, 2018—in terms of housing, Budget 2018 affirms our commitment to providing access to safe and affordable housing for low- and medium-income households in communities across Manitoba. We know that housing is a key determinant to address poverty. This is why Budget 2018 provides \$8.9-million increase for housing, which represents a 8.3 per cent increase over last year's budget. We know that housing—sorry, the additional supports will cover the costs of operating the social housing portfolio and other forms of housing assistance for 35,000 subsidized households across Manitoba.

Our government's funding of \$116 million for the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation in our budget in 2018 demonstrates the importance of sustaining a system of housing supports for Manitoban's most vulnerable low 'incan' individuals and families. Manitoba Housing is committed to ongoing improvements to social housing, which is why almost \$130 million in Loan Act authority will be provided for capital costs in 2018-19 on

government-owned housing stock. This includes necessary maintenance and improvements on social housing through multi-year capital programs, new construction and land development initiatives.

Manitoba—maintaining our social housing stock is one of the many ways our government is supporting housing needs of low-income Manitobans. We know that there is much more to do, which is why we have developed the provincial housing strategy. To inform the development of the housing strategy, Manitoba Housing undertook province-wide consultations. And what we've heard, provincial housing strategy consultation report was publicly released on February 20th, 2018; it is on our website. The development of the made-in-Manitoba housing strategy is underway. The strategy will outline provincial priorities in response to current challenges and opportunities, inform effective housing policy and program design, and support improved outcomes for low-to-moderate-income households.

Our government is encouraged by the National Housing Strategy and the federal government's strategies for new housing investments. We recognize that housing is a shared responsibility and look forward to working in partnership with all levels of government, community stakeholders and the private sector to address housing needs in Manitoba. The Manitoba government knows that our relationships with community partners is key to the success of social and affordable housing at the local and regional level. We also recognize that local housing providers have the expertise and understanding—or, in understanding local needs and resources. Manitoba Housing will continue to build on the capacity of the non-profit and private housing sectors. Collaboration with other government service providers and community stakeholders is also helping on addressing the housing needs for most vulnerable Manitobans.

We know that owning a house, a home, is important to many Manitobans, but housing market conditions have placed home ownership out of reach for many families. In order to assist low-to-moderate-income families to access the housing market and build equity, Manitoba Housing offers assistance to make home ownership a reality for many Manitobans.

In terms of early learning and child care, quality affordable and accessible child-care spaces continue to be highly demanded across the province. As

Minister of Families, I am committed to addressing this issue by shortening wait times and increasing accessibility and licensed child-care services for parents. As such, Budget 2018 supports the creation of more than 700 new and newly funded spaces, including funding for new child-care constructions, communities and schools across Manitoba.

We also are pleased to announce the federal investments of close—the federal-provincial investments of close to \$47 million under the recent signed Manitoba–Canada–Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, which targets 1,400 new and newly funded child-care spaces throughout Manitoba over three years, from 2017 through to '20.

To meet the government's commitment to reinvest—investment in private-sector early-learning and child-care spaces, Budget 2018 also includes \$2 million in funding for Child Care Centre Development Tax Credit. This refundable tax credit is designed to encourage private businesses to create new child-care spaces for their employees and the surrounding communities.

In addition to creating new child-care spaces, our government recognizes the Manitoba needs and array of options to meet the child-care needs to allow parents to pursue opportunities to learn and work while knowing that other children are in a safe environment. This is why, since coming to office in the spring of 2016, our government has increased the early-learning and child-care financial assistance in grant by close to \$16 million in the 2017 and '18 budgets. It's almost a 10 per cent increase in Budget 2016.

I want to be clear that our \$15.9-million early-learning and child-care investments in budget 2017-18 is addition to the \$47-million contribution that Manitoba and the federal government made in the 2017 through 2020 budgets, approved under the Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

To support existing child-care facilities, in March 2018 we announced \$2.3 million annually, which we allocated to 621 existing child-care spaces, and 63 centres across the province. The funding will help—it'll help ensure centres can remain affordable for Manitoba families and financially stable.

\*(10:10)

Our priorities for early learning and child care are realistic, practical and cost-effective and sustainable for Manitoba families. Our government

balances affordable, accessible child-care spaces for families with revenues needed to continue to support quality programming for child care.

In terms of family services—in terms of Child and Family Services, our child-welfare system is currently not meeting the needs of children's families. The government is committed to improving outcomes through child-welfare transformational change and focus on family and community supports and prevention.

Keeping children safe means focusing on supporting healthy development of child, families and communities. The 2018 budget includes a \$35-million increase with Child and Family Services funding. Funding is not there to—is there to really support vulnerable individuals.

We recognize need to modernize our Child and Family Services through legislation to enable shifts in practice, decision making and provisions of service to better support Manitoba's children and families. This is why community engagement and listening to Manitobans is part of the process, to ensure that legislative reforms meets the needs of Manitobans.

Our government is working to reform the child-welfare system and create better outcomes for matters of children. We are committed to comprehensive plan going forward and have engaged in many services and supports and reforms that we work with the community to go forward.

In terms of supports for children with disabilities, our government remains committed to ensuring that children who require therapy services are able to access these services. Budget 2018 provides an increase of over \$700,000 for Children's Therapy Initiative, which delivers provincial therapy supports through a collaborated—collaborative, coordinated approach. Budget 2018 also provides \$130,000—\$131,000 of additional funding to reduce wait times for clinical services for children with disabilities and their families, delivering by St. Amant.

In terms of support for persons with disabilities, we have—and I know my time is running low, so I'm going to talk a little bit about 'provety' as the—as Minister of Families, and my role as co-chair of the Poverty Reduction Committee. I'm aware of the experiences of poverty and prevention. It really—as a—is a complex issue, I'll say. Budget 2018 establishes our whole government committee to reducing poverty. The budget increases the basic

personal exemption on non-refundable tax credit for every Manitoba, and able to do this—our basic personal amount increased by a combined \$2,020 by 2020, which removes more than 31,000 taxpayers from the roll, which, we think, is very much important.

The commitment to poverty reduction is highlighted throughout 'messments' made through a department. We recognize addressing poverty is a shared responsibility amongst governments, community organizations and business sectors.

Our government is currently involved in consultation processes to make sure we get it right. In fact, we've gone to a number of communities, including Winnipeg, Selkirk, Brandon, Thompson, Flin Flon, in terms of developing these services.

I do also want to say that I am pleased to report that employment and income assistance, EIA, caseloads only has grown by 1.5 per cent from 2017 through '18. This represents a significant reversal of high caseload growth that we've seen in the past.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know my time is up, and I'll be happy to answer any—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member's time is up.

We want to thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** I want to thank the minister for his opening remarks.

I'm pleased to have my first full time in Estimates; last time I was cut short. I had a couple of chances to ask the minister questions around this portfolio, so I'm just pleased to be here to be able to do that.

As we move to the process, I believe some of my NDP colleagues will also want to ask some questions, as well as some of other independent members.

The Families budget is a significant portion of the overall government expenditures, and it covers services which, of course, are incredibly important to the everyday lives of Manitoba, as we look at, you know, the CFS file, poverty file, EIA, housing and disability services—all very critical services to Manitobans that deserve the supports that they need.

Since taking office, the Minister of Families has made some significant changes to the services that his department provides. Most recently, a new round of cuts to the Rent Assist and Manitoba Housing will have a large impact on families who depend on those 'subsidies' to afford quality housing. And we've certainly had many of our constituents reaching out in the last 24 hours, speaking about these very cuts that are going to drastically sever their income, which is going to make it hard for them to live and support their families.

The minister has also signed on to a federal housing strategy, which I'm, certainly—you know, will be exploring in greater detail, as we move forward, as we know that our housing stock is running low in Manitoba, here, and that there are many people that need housing that are on that list that have been waiting for several years, that are in places that are not significant to the amount of children or family in their households. So we're looking forward to new housing being built, as the minister spoke of earlier.

I'm pleased to see that the minister's taken some positive steps towards the area of Child and Family Services, namely the continuation of the former government's work on customary care. I think customary care is the direction that we need to be going. We have many families who are able to take care of children that aren't necessarily their biological child but are blood related, and, certainly, you know, our government is moving of the direction of supporting that. So I just want to applaud that and—

The minister will know that the issue of CFS, of course, is close to my heart, and I'll have quite a few questions around that and the legislation, as well as other legislation that the minister is introducing pertaining to foster homes and permanent wards.

Campaign 2000's recent report on the national poverty strategy report—that was at 27.5 per cent, Manitoba currently has the highest child and family services—or highest poverty rate here in Canada. This means that two out of every seven children in our province are living below the poverty rate. And I know, as government and as Manitobans, we can be doing better, and, you know, as government, it is our responsibility to make sure that these children are taken care of, their needs are met and that we're providing services that are helping families get the support they need to make sure that's happening.

In our North End schools, and I'm sure right across our province, we know that nutrition programs are underfunded, which means children are not getting the nutrition they need, and schools aren't able to provide that as well.

\* (10:20)

So, I'm sure the minister and I will discuss the critical issues and the need for a comprehensive strategy to end child poverty in Manitoba.

I was pleased to take part in one of the consultations that happened at the native family centre in my constituency in the North End on Selkirk Avenue around the poverty strategy that this government has yet to roll out, so I'm looking forward to hear where that's at and when we can hear about that plan and how we can work together to eradicate poverty in this province.

I understand the department is undergoing a legislative review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, and I look forward to becoming more familiar with that review and the structure that division undertakes. And the supports for people with—persons with disabilities and their caregivers is also, you know, a major part of our minister's department, so we hear lots of cuts that are drastically affecting people with disabilities, so we'd like to hear what the plan is to support those people that no longer have those supports.

Finally, the minister and I have spoken at length in question period about the need for more affordable, accessible child-care spaces for Manitoba families. You know, we heard you reference 700 new spaces. We currently have 17,000 children, and that was as of last year in October. We don't know what the numbers are today, so I'm looking forward to hearing the minister speak to, you know, the other 17,300—or, 16,300 children who are still going to be waiting on this list after these 700 new spaces are created.

That's great we're creating new spaces, but when we have kids waiting on lists, we have parents sitting at home that possibly are at risk of losing their job, which, you know, has a detriment to our economy—and we want parents to be working; we want kids to be in safe spaces and daycares where families know that their kids are being taken care of. So I look forward to also hearing about, you know, this new plan.

And also he referenced the building of new housing, so I'd like to hear a little more about where

these—where this new social housing units are being built and when their plan is to roll them out. And, in the meantime, what are we doing to make sure the ones we have are being taken care of and that there's actually people living in them?

So, with that, Mr. Chair, I'm prepared to give—to proceed with the process, and miigwech.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay. I want to thank the critic for the—of the official opposition for those remarks.

Under the Manitoba practice, the debate for the minister's salary is the last item considered in the department of—Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration for line item 9.1.(a) contained in the resolution 9.1.

At this time, I invite the ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber, and we ask—and as we—they're entering the Chamber, we'll have the minister introduce his staff once they get seated.

Okay, maybe the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) can introduce her staff. She's here first.

**Mrs. Smith:** So, this is Emily Coutts; she's our amazing staff.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Thank you.

The honourable minister, can you introduce your staff?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes. We're joined here by the deputy minister of the department, Jay Rodgers; assistant deputy minister, Brian Brown; Catherine Gates, who's executive director for all—for EIA; and also Michelle Stephen-Wiens, who's in charge of Early Learning and Child Care for the province.

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

Does the committee want to wish to proceed with the Estimates of this department in chronologically or have a global discussion?

**Mrs. Smith:** Global discussion.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Global? Agreed, Minister? A global discussion? *[Agreed]*

Okay, and I want to thank—and it's agreed that the questioning for this department will be—proceed in a global manner, and the resolution to be passed once the question has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Smith:** I just want to let members opposite know that we'll kind of be going through staffing,

just so that you're prepared and hopefully have your staff here that'll be able to answer some of these questions; EIA and Rent Assist, and then on to poverty.

*So—[interjection]*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The honourable member for Point Douglas.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can the minister undertake to provide a list of senior staff and their roles within their departments?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes.

First of all, just want to, you know, say that we're very fortunate in the Department of Families. We've got excellent staff and I just want to first—before I get to saying—I want to say thank you to everything that our staff does on an everyday basis. Provide great service. And sometimes in this business you get calls, have to make calls at all hours of the night, and sometimes I do that just to get the answers, and I can say that our senior staff has just been fabulous to work with.

The members of the senior staff, really for administration purposes: Jay Rodgers, our deputy minister; Brian Brown, as mentioned—so Brian is in charge of all things finance in the Department of Families; Jennifer Rattray, who is charge of Community Programs and Corporate Services; Jill Perron, who is, you know, acting—or executive—or acting ADM for CFS; as well as Michelle Dubik, who is Community Service Delivery, CLDS; and Steve Spry, he is a head of the Manitoba—or the Manitoba housing and rehabilitation corporation.

**Mrs. Smith:** Miigwech for that, and I'm sure your staff does an amazing job. I know it's a big portfolio and a big undertaking, so I also want to say, you know, miigwech to your staff.

Can the minister tell us how many total staff are in the department?

**Mr. Fielding:** I'll just refer the member to pages 15 and 16 of the supplementary report, but essentially there's just over 2,000–2,058. That's part of, I guess, the core government; that doesn't include MHRC.

**Mrs. Smith:** Miigwech for that.

Can the minister tell us how many staff are full-time and how many are part-time?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes. Just referring back to that number, the 2,058; that is the full-time equivalent

numbers. There is numbers of part-time that are incorporated in that, but we don't break that out from a part-time basis from—for these purposes.

\* (10:30)

**Mrs. Smith:** Are there any staff that are on secondment from different—secondment to the department?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, just conferring with our staff here, I believe there's two employees: one that is seconded out to another department and one that's seconded in. That's the ones that we can identify here with our officials.

**Mrs. Smith:** I know I asked this question—or earlier about full-time positions. Are there any full-time positions that were turned into part-time positions, and if so, which ones, how many, and why?

**Mr. Fielding:** I don't believe there is any.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can the minister undertake to provide a list of staff within Priorities and Planning that work within the Families Department?

**Mr. Fielding:** I'll have to refer that question to Executive Council, as Priorities and Planning fall within the Executive Council appropriations.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can the minister undertake to provide a list of any staff associated with transformation management or systems realignment?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, so, we have, really, one person dedicated towards that type of—sort of initiatives. You know, as you take on a big transformational system change, there's, of course, many staff that, you know, beyond, probably in the corner of their desk, are doing different functions of it. But there's one current staff member that is full time doing those types of initiatives.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can the minister tell us how many vacancies are currently within his department?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, so there, right now, is 328 staffing positions that are vacant. A part of that 328, we are currently hiring, where there's been notice or in the process of hiring 134 positions. So that's about a 9.3 per cent, which is, I believe, less than it was in 2014—very similar to what it is in 2015 and less than we were last year at 10.8 per cent.

**Mrs. Smith:** I'm going back to question 7. You referenced that there was one person that's really in charge of transformation management and systems realignment.

Would the minister tell me who that person is?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, the person that's leading it is Brent Timmerman.

**Mrs. Smith:** Sorry, can you—I didn't quite hear that. *[interjection]*

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

**Mr. Fielding:** Brent Timmerman. *[interjection]*

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

**Mr. Fielding:** So he's the leader of it, but, to be fair, there is a whole bunch of people in the departments that do this through their regular course of business, whether it's on the side of the desk or not, is—kind of duties assigned, I guess, if I—if you will.

**Mrs. Smith:** Miigwech. Thank you for that.

So you referenced 134 positions that you're currently posting for and filling. There's 328 that are vacant. Is there a plan to fill the rest of those positions?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, so there—as you have natural turnover, people obviously exit and enter jobs that would be there, so, as jobs come vacant for a variety of reasons, you make those determinations on a—you know, each and every basis on terms of those types of employees. So those decisions are currently being made.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can the minister tell us when these positions—when they plan to fill them? Like, in the next month? In the next six months?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, you know, as you have positions come open, if you've got a staff of over 2,000 people, you're naturally going to have turnover that's there. So you make those decisions as we go forward. You know, maybe you look at previous trends. We're, of course, kind of below levels that we have been in the past, right. If you look at 2014, for instance, we're at 9.7 per cent vacancy, so we're substantially under that this year, as well as 2015 and '16, we're right around—a little bit higher than that, and last year we were actually quite a bit lower, the vacancies, than we are.

\* (10:40)

So, as positions come vacant, they are open, there of course is a process once you do make the decision to fill those types of positions. It—there's a kind of interviewing process that goes on. There's a

posting. I don't, from an administrative basis, I don't exactly know what the timeframes of how, what length there is in terms of posting these, but, as you can imagine, there's an administrative process that goes on once you make decisions on which positions you fill.

**Mrs. Smith:** Has the minister received any direction from Cabinet to keep some of these positions vacant?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right. When you do have close to 2,000 staff-plus housing staff, you know, really what you end up doing is evaluating positions on a case-by-case basis, so you make those determinations. Sometimes you decide to expand services; sometimes these people, they may have too much work on their plate, so you break it up. Sometimes you might go the opposite direction. Sometimes you keep the existing. So it's really tough to kind of, on a one-off basis, tell you that process, but I can tell you that we do evaluate these things and we make sure that services and supports are there for citizens.

**Mrs. Smith:** So, just going back to that number, 328, to 134 positions are posted, so does that mean those hundred-and-something jobs are not positions anymore that are to be filled?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right. So we have 134 positions vacant that are currently being filled, so that is quite a bit of work, I would say, from an administrative basis, from an HR basis, and for the other positions, of course, you evaluate those on a one-off basis to make sure that they're appropriate positions. That's something that the department, when you're dealing with years. What we're dealing with, we want to make sure we're getting it done right and so that's why we evaluate these things on a one-off basis.

**Mrs. Smith:** So the 196 positions that aren't posted, are those positions that you evaluate to be positions that you don't need anymore? Is that why they're not posted?

**Mr. Fielding:** No. That's not at all what I'm saying. What I'm saying is you evaluate positions on a one-off basis and you need to determine workloads. I'll give you an example. For instance, in child care, we're accepting a lot more money from partnership agreements with Ottawa for \$47 million. So there is some staff that's associated with that, so sometimes when you have different areas and priorities for government, sometimes you'll add staff; sometimes you don't, so there's a lot of examples for both ways, so it's really—it's difficult to kind of pinhole it down as a global number. It's kind of more a one-off basis,

so we try and make the best decisions on it. Sometimes you add, sometimes you delete, sometimes you change the role. So those are processes that you do on a one-off basis.

**Mrs. Smith:** It is a lot of positions, a lot of jobs and a lot of people that aren't working. So I just want to make that clear. The 134 positions—they're currently posted; you're currently interviewing. And when is there a plan to fill these positions?

**Mr. Fielding:** So the 134 are at various stages of the hiring process. Some are posted. Some are being processed. Some are being reviewed. Some are, I would assume, being interviewed.

Without, kind of, you know, looking at each and every one of them in front of me before you, I can just globally say that they're at different stages of being hiring—hired.

**Mrs. Smith:** Does the department have a vacancy management policy?

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, I'd like to say, and this really is to the credit of the department, for the first time in close to 15 years, the department is on budget. And so I'm proud of the fact that staffing decisions are made based on what is appropriated through the budget process.

**Mrs. Smith:** So does that mean that there is no vacancy management policy within the department?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right. So the budget appropriation recognizes staff turnover. You know, of course, in departments, you have natural staff turnover that happens, not just in Families, but in Justice, Health and in others.

And so we try—it's kind of a balancing act, of course, right? Because you want to make sure that you have appropriate staffing levels that are there to a certain extent sometimes that you don't really have control when people decide they're moving on to a different activity or they're moving on to a different job or career.

You obviously wouldn't want to stand in the way of people moving into different roles or moving into, maybe, a non-profit or private—whatever they're going to do, they're going to have—make those life determinations.

So what we try and do is measure staffing at a level that really provides good supports for our citizens but also meets the financial objectives of the department.

**Mrs. Smith:** I'm going to take that as a no, you don't have a vacancy management policy.

I'll go on to a next question. Can the minister please explain the roles of the following vacancies? And there is a number of them, so I'll just go one by one, and then if you can explain them and the strategy of the department to fill them.

So the first is, there's two full-time postings under managerial in Rural and Northern Services. And that's on page 47, if you want to reference that.

\* (10:50)

**Mr. Fielding:** Can we just—sorry, can we just get clarification on the question again? Sorry, can we just get clarification on the question again?

**Mrs. Smith:** So, on page 47, there's two full-time postings under Managerial in Rural and Northern Services. Can you explain the vacancies and the strategies to fill them?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes. Those are management positions in Parkland and Central. These are long-term vacant positions, and the responsibilities are amalgamated together.

**Mrs. Smith:** On page 51, there is three full-time managerial in Winnipeg Services. Can the minister answer the same question? So what is the roles of them, and is there any strategy to fill them?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right. So we have gone from 25 to 22 managers, and those positions are amalgamated together, the responsibilities are amalgamated together, so there's three less manager positions in that—those—that role.

**Mrs. Smith:** On page 51, same page, same question, there's five full time under Professional/Technical that were eliminated as well. Is there plans to fill those, or strategies? And what were their responsibilities?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, maybe I'll just handle all of those relating questions. The impact there—in terms—there'll be very minimal impact in terms of the services. The three area director positions report to community area director in—and this is the three that you're talking initially—in Winnipeg area, whose positions are jointly funded by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the department.

The community area directors are now—have a greater span of supervision in the areas of Winnipeg. The administrative positions in Winnipeg and provincial services are no longer required, due to

identified efficiencies and the ability of other positions to take on these roles.

The supervisor and specialist position in rural Manitoba are no longer required that—in their respective regions. These positions are vacant, and their responsibilities can be managed by existing staff complement. And the Manitoba development centre, only permanent vacant positions or functions that are no longer required, or identified for elimination, these are no longer a part of it.

In terms of the five positions, the Family Conciliation councillor positions provide mediation and assessment services, first service based, regardless of family income. The elimination of these positions is going to be able to be managed with an existing staff.

\* (11:00)

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister for that answer.

So we'll now move into EIA and Rent Assist. So the minister referenced that there's now less people on EIA than there was previous year. So can the minister tell us how many individuals presently receive EIA in Manitoba and how many families receive EIA?

**Mr. Fielding:** There's 42,692. This—these are the February numbers. Sometimes it takes a little bit to get the updated numbers. That's about a 1–1.5 per cent increase over—year over year from last year.

**Mrs. Smith:** So can the minister provide how many individuals and how many families are currently on EIA?

**Mr. Fielding:** I don't know if I have that category. I do have four or five different categories, which I can go through. These numbers are related to February; February are closing numbers.

So the first one is single parents. There is 8,447 parents that are associated with the program. In terms of the general assistance program, there is 13,139. Persons with disabilities, there is 20,862. There is another category; I don't have exactly what that's made up, but there's 244 in the other category. Sorry, the other categories include children, aged, special dependant care, students and special cases.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can the minister tell us where do these individuals and families live? How many are in Winnipeg, Brandon, rural Manitoba or the North?

**Mr. Fielding:** We don't have that number broken down, although that is a number that we could refer back to.

**Mrs. Smith:** Can we expect that at the next meeting? Estimates meeting?

**Mr. Fielding:** Whatever the rules of Estimates says the time frame, we'll meet.

**Mrs. Smith:** I was just hoping that we could get a time frame on that instead of doing this back-and-forth thing. Think it is important to kind of identify where the need is greatest, and how do we help facilitate people moving from EIA into the jobs market, so.

Can the minister tell us how many individuals presently receive Rent Assist in Manitoba, and how many of them are families?

**Mr. Fielding:** Anything related to this, I'm going to use the February numbers just as a reference point just to be consistent with it.

So the way the Rent Assist program works if you're on EIA—so, you're not currently working—you still have EIA Rent Assist. The people that are non-EIA are obviously, you know, either in the work field or what have you.

So I'll be able to list them and there is a bunch of different categories. So again, using February data, in terms of seniors, there is—sorry—there's 2,635 seniors as of February that are enrolled in the non-EIA Rent Assist. That's the caseload. If you look at the Families component of it, it is 3,280. If you look at the disabled individuals, there is 172, and if you look at the general category, there is 1,485, for a total of—1,485—for a total of 7,572.

**Mrs. Smith:** How many people who are on EIA receive Rent Assist?

**Mr. Fielding:** So the number is about 25,000 of EIA recipients that live in the private market get the Rent Assist program. There, of course, is the non-EIA Rent Assist where people that live in the private marketplace, and that's the other number that I referenced, the 75 and change. I don't have the exact numbers. I just—the number I just quoted, the 7,572 are non-EIA Rent Assist.

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister for those answers.

Can he tell us where these individuals—sorry—how many individuals presently live in Manitoba Housing units?



\* (11:10)

**Mr. Fielding:** Right. And so, first of all, on—if you look on page 104 of the book, I will quote some of the numbers.

In terms of MHRC, we own approximately 17,900 units—Manitoba Housing units and 10 emergency shelters for victims of violence, of which 13,700 units are owned and directly managed by the corporation. A remainder of 4,200 units are owned by MHRC, are managed by non-profit or co-operative sponsorship groups on a property—you know, on a, I guess, sponsor management basis.

**Mrs. Smith:** So, out of the 17,900 units, how many of those are occupied in there by individuals and families?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right. So, there is—and this is kind of a ballpark, but I think it gives you the general direction—around 665 units that are available to rent and vacant.

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister for that answer.

Of those 6,065 units, are they livable in the midst of renovations? Rentable?

**Mr. Fielding:** Of the 650 that are in the process of being tenanted, if that's a word.

**Mrs. Smith:** So the minister had given us a vacancy rate. Is he able to provide the occupancy rate?

**Mr. Fielding:** Occupancy rate is around 90 per cent, which is pretty consistent over the last number of years.

**Mrs. Smith:** So 17,900 units; there's 6,000 currently unoccupied?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, just a correction of the record: it's 665 units are—that's vacant and ready for tenants to come in.

**Mrs. Smith:** So, of those 17,900 units, 665 are vacant, ready to be rented.

Are there any units that are sitting, waiting to be renovated, that are uninhabitable right now?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right, yes, just part of the natural process of people moving in and out, there's a process where you have to refresh the units—you'll do paint, you'll do a whole bunch of other things. Sometimes the units are in better condition than others. I know once, I was with the members from Brandon East and West, we toured a whole bunch of Manitoba Housing units that were in pretty poor

shape. So sometimes the units are—more extensive work needs to happen. Sometimes it's just a fresh coat paint, which means you could get them up and ready for tenants to come back in, but it really depends. And that's kind of a natural course of, kind of, that turnover, I guess, if you will.

**Mrs. Smith:** So I've lived in Manitoba Housing a number of times throughout my life, and I do understand that there is deterioration, like our own homes.

So the question was: How many are sitting, waiting to be painted? And I understand, like, there is a backlog, possibly, or—you know, you don't have enough people to be able to do that.

How many are currently waiting for those types of renovations, sitting vacant?

**Mr. Fielding:** So, above and beyond the 665 number that mentioned, there's 216 units that are currently being refreshed.

**Mrs. Smith:** Miigwech. Thank you for that.

And I know, when I lived in Manitoba Housing, that they kind of prioritize the people that were living in their homes that needed renovations before going into vacant suites.

Can the minister tell us how many people are currently on a wait-list waiting to get into Manitoba Housing?

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, so there is 505 people on a waiting list. In the process of being 'tentated', a part of that 665 vacant list. Now what I do want to reference, the fact that there has been some changes to the system and, I think for the most part, people have identified that is—it is probably a better system, because you get interviewed. Instead of just going to a certain house, you're able to kind of, identify your needs and that sorts.

So, for the most part, I think most of the—in fact I think all the tenants have agreed that it's a bit more of a, you know, better process, I guess, to identify what needs are versus, you know, where there's conditions that would be appropriate in the locations that'd be appropriate for them.

**Mrs. Smith:** Miigwech for that answer.

I just want to thank the minister for helping a couple of my constituents get into housing. You know, it was a process for them. They had been on a

list for a couple of years waiting and wanted to get into a certain area and because of renovations were not able to get into that housing unit where there were over 100 units. But they were able to get into housing, which prevented them from being homeless.

So I just want to say thank you for that, and I wanted to ask a little bit about how many people are currently waiting, in their current homes, for renovations to be done from Manitoba Housing?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right, on an annual basis—you know, and this is a ballpark figure, but, for the most part, there's about 100 units that are kind of a deep refresh, I guess, if you will, on a yearly basis. So that would probably be the number in question.

*Mr. Blair Yakimoski, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

There is other people that are impacted, as you do kind of minor stuff from a housing point of view, but the number that we do the deep fresh on is somewhere around 100. That's how many people probably would be—100 units, so that could be more people depending on how many people are in the units.

**Mrs. Smith:** The minister referenced 665 vacant units, 260 of them being in need of repair, 505 people on the wait-list.

Can the minister tell us: What's the total number of people waiting to be housed?

**Mr. Fielding:** I'll revert back to that number, the 505, because there—you know, obviously, there's a process that goes through. So the number is 505.

**Mrs. Smith:** So 505 families, 505 individuals, five hundred and—a mix of both?

**Mr. Fielding:** You know, I don't have the breakdown here. It's a combination of all—you know, I'm sure that's something that we probably could find out. I certainly don't have it here. But, you know, suffice it to say there is 505 individuals, or families or, you know, combination of everything that are waiting for Manitoba Housing.

**Mrs. Smith:** When constituents contacted me about being on the Manitoba Housing list, they had contacted Manitoba Housing but never had been contacted by Manitoba Housing.

Is there a strategy in place in terms of getting these 505 individuals, families off this list and into housing?

\* (11:30)

**Mr. Fielding:** Right.

So there's an extensive process. We made some changes to the way we engage, I guess I'd say, you know, potential tenants. And before there was kind of a limited ability and limited flexibility of where you would live and how you would do that.

There is more regimented process that really explores, kind of, the needs of the individuals. So there's kind of an interview process that happens. And I understand from, you know—prior to that, that didn't take place. There was obviously some connections, interactions but they literally have more of an engaging process to go through.

So there's been quite a bit of policy-change work on it, and for the most part, you know, I've talked to a lot of people. In fact, I've gotten letters to my office that it is probably a more thorough process that allows people to have more, you know, choice and flexibility and kind of understand their needs, I guess, a little bit more than prior to the policy change last year.

**Mrs. Smith:** From speaking with people who have applied to Manitoba Housing, they're being told that if they don't take the first unit that they're offered, that they are taken off the list.

Can the minister tell me if this is indeed happening?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right.

Manitoba Housing social-housing rental policy is primarily in large—the large program delivered in Manitoba Housing. The program provides low-income Manitobans with the greatest needs in subsidized housing.

Manitoba Housing has completed a significant review of the program with the goals of improving and modernizing the program. The modernization program is supported by policies that enable delivery to be client-focussed, efficient, equitable and consistent with all Manitobans.

A new application interview process was launched in July 2017. Interviews are the start of the relationship between Manitoba Housing and the future tenant. Interviews provide Manitoba Housing with the necessary information to find the right housing to meet the needs of applicants. The policy changes allows applicants to access housing faster, allow Manitoba Housing to locate the right home for

the tenant by making housing choices a priority of the time of applicants and eliminate the need for the unit transferred unless health and safety issues are an issue.

So, really, their standard of process—that wouldn't be the case where they'd be kicked off the list, but if there is a certain circumstance, if you could provide any details on that, I can look for that specific case. But that isn't the standard protocol with the policies that are laid out.

**Mrs. Smith:** That would be great if you could look into that because I've had two cases, actually, where that was the case. One of them, their family lived in a certain area. There was housing available there. I think they were in—just needed a fresh coat of paint. Number of units available.

They were moved to The Maples where they didn't have very much support, and their kids were moved over there as well where they weren't attending school, so they also had to move schools.

So, when we're talking about best needs of families, I hope that they're keeping those things in mind, of where their supports are, where the kids are going to school and trying to keep them—that stability in those cases. So, I appreciate you saying that you're going to look into that.

And so, I want to ask a little bit about—we've had a number of constituencies—and I'm sure members on the other side have also had calls about bedbugs, cockroaches, rodents.

Can you tell us: What is the policy in, you know, addressing those? Is it tracked? Is it at the building level? How long is it taking for these individuals to get their unit sprayed?

\* (11:40)

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, bedbug control is a growing challenge in many urban centres. Manitoba Housing offers a comprehensive integrated pest control service for tenants. Manitoba Housing has implemented pilot program that are providing additional services for large buildings, physical interventions, including larviciding and—sorry—laundering and—laundering, vacuuming, steaming and yielding encourages results. Manitoba Housing is also focused on providing accurate information to contractors, staff and tenants. Improving tenant participation is addressing bedbugs.

And just in terms of some of the numbers, I believe the numbers, if I'm not mistaken, here are—

there's 200—yes, so 2017, the average number of units treated per month was—this is 'precautionary' as well as full treatments, there was 2,566. And in 2017, average number of units with live activity treated monthly, and that's full treatment, is 406. In terms of treatment in sponsored management buildings, there—in 2017, the average number of units treated was 533, and 2017, the average number of units with live activity treatments was 91. And just further to add that, as of March 2018, we have 297 units with bedbugs, our lowest since—that we started measuring this. Ninety-seven point eight per cent of our direct management units are bedbug free, I'm happy to report.

**The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski):** The honourable minister.

**Mr. Fielding:** Is it possible to take a five-minute recess or three-minute recess?

**The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski):** Is it the leave of the committee to take a recess for about five minutes?

Committee is recessed.

*The committee recessed at 11:45 a.m.*

*The committee resumed at 11:52 a.m.*

*Mr. Chairperson in the Chair*

**Mr. Chairperson:** Okay, well, the recess will be—is dispensed, and so we'll continue with the questioning.

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** Thank the minister and his staff for giving me the opportunity to ask a few questions there, constituency-based, but I hope that they appreciate that there're broader policy questions at stake here.

I also want to acknowledge the students in the gallery that have just joined us. In case you're wondering, this is the Estimates process, and so this is a chance for us to ask the minister, in opposition, about aspects of the budget. And so welcome, here this morning, and I know the minister will want to do the same.

I want to begin, just to pick up on the member from Point Douglas, just around bedbugs. One of the things he didn't—the minister didn't mention in his answer was about the service to move furniture for residents in Manitoba Housing, because in the absence of having some support to move the

furniture, the—it's not possible, really, to address the bedbug issue in any particular manner. So I just wanted to draw that to his attention, and maybe he could just quickly answer that as well.

But what—I have received a letter from the deputy—I much appreciate that—on concerns that we have in Fort Garry-Riverview around safety at Fred Tipping Place. And I appreciate that there's a commitment there to do a security audit in the very near future, but that was left as to what date that might be. I can tell you that the security issues there are very, very significant and reflect on the health and safety of the residents there.

So, if we could begin. If the minister could just point us to where in the Estimates book we would find the light—line item for security services in Manitoba Housing?

And, then, if he can further tell us what the budget appropriation for security services are at Manitoba Housing.

And, then, thirdly, if he could also identify how many people are working in security at Manitoba Housing now and whether there has been a decrease in the number of people working there.

**Mr. Fielding:** I point the member to page 107 in the Estimates book. It is under the direct management, so it isn't broken out per se in terms of that area, but it is broken in that area. I think the second question is how many staff. I believe it is—the number is right around 50.

**Mr. Allum:** Okay. So, actually—thank you. I thank the minister for that. The second question was: What is the budget appropriation for security services at—I'd like to put—him to put it on the record and whether that—there's been an increase or a decrease in those resources from last year into this year.

And then, of the 50 people he identified working there, how many are administrative, how many are management, and how many are actually security guards who respond to concerns at a Manitoba Housing facility?

**Mr. Fielding:** In the essence of time, I—we don't have the stats right here. Is that something that'd be appropriate for the minister, if we got back to—with the—and so, just so I'm clear, the number was, what is the exact budget for security types of apparatuses, I guess; you know, what roles do they function; are they administrative, or are they actually in the field? I think those were the two general questions. So we'll

respond back. We'll be able to get that information to you ASAP.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes, thank you. That would be very much appreciated. I appreciate that's drilling down just a little bit, but it would be very helpful to know just how many folks are working who are the first responders when an incident is phoned in.

Information that may or may not be correct is that we had heard that there were, at one time, 35 such folks. Now we hear there's only 17, so we wanted just to get clarity on that manner. It's an important circumstance, I think. At Fred Tipping Place in particular, we work with residents all the time to file the incident report so that there's a record of what happened. And I think most of the time that happens—maybe not always, but there have been occasions when the response has not been immediate even though the residents themselves feel very threatened by it.

The minister will know, in addition to just basic, general security concerns, there are concerns about needles in stairwells, and so could he outline for me, in brief, just what—how do they address those kinds of issues around safety in the building when 'needers'—needles are found, when there's a perception that there might be drug dealing in the building. Just what is the process that the department goes through to address those kinds of issues?

\* (12:00)

**Mr. Fielding:** And we do provide training for our staff on situational items. I mean, there is training to deal with, like, the one mention that you mentioned was drug, you know, kind of items and that sorts of stuff be there, so that training is something that is ongoing.

If situations escalate, for instance, they do work fairly closely with the Winnipeg police. There is kind of routine—not routinely, but on occasion there is times where the police do get involved if there's—I know there's been cases where there's been homicides, I think one, at least, in the last year and a half, and if there's any drug charges. I know there was a recent incident in the paper where there was an individual that was obviously high on, I think it was meth, that had taken over kind of a common area, and so that's something that the training does allow them to do.

But, again, if the situations need escalation, then they work fairly closely with the Winnipeg Police Service to address the situations as they go forward.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes. I appreciate that answer, and I'm glad to hear that there is training.

I also think that residents need some kind of education about how to address that when they encounter needles in the stairwells and/or other places where other paraphernalia or other circumstances, and I know at Fred Tipping I was advised by the deputy that there was a security seminar given at Fred Tipping recently. I much appreciate that that undertaken, but I think residents also need to understand completely what action they should take when they encounter those circumstances.

I'm going to change topics now. It's another local issue but I think it strikes to a larger policy issue. We have a resident constituent in Fort Garry-Riverview who had received a residential school settlement but, at the same time, is also receiving EIA. And so the individual was contacted by her worker asking for documentation on the residential school settlement, and it had been a long-standing policy in our government that residential school settlements were to be treated independent of any other income or assets.

So I want to ask the minister: Is that still the policy of the government today?

**Mr. Fielding:** Right. There is very—you're absolutely right. There is circumstances where there's been settlements or, I guess payments, for lack of a better term, for various, and those things are not considered as an income, I guess, if you will, kind of, from EIA calculations.

So, I guess a couple examples—I believe residential schools, that's something that just had passed very recently and also things like if there's settlements from, I think, land claims, flood claims, that are part of that; they don't take that into consideration. It's income which would obviously drive their income levels up which would reduce their benefit.

So those things—'60s scoop I think, is another settlement that we don't take into consideration any of the claims and monies that may be, you know, acquired from those, you know, being a part of that process, so that hasn't changed.

**Mr. Allum:** Thank you for that. I appreciate that answer. The resident in question here was called, I would say, more than once by the worker and maybe even manager asking for this same documentation, and were it not for the intervention of my office who

had contacted the Fairness Commissioner who, in turn, contacted the manager's office that some pressure in that regard was lessened, but I—it wasn't clear to us whether a policy change had taken place. In this case, I think the issue related to an asset that had been purchased.

So are assets—a car, as an example—considered as part of that policy that the government, as I understand it, is still maintaining?

**Mr. Fielding:** Yes, I do want to say that there is a policy of Manitoba Housing not to ask those particular questions. I can't specifically talk about that case, but, on a general basis, I can tell you, sometimes protocols, if they're not followed correctly on the ground level, we try and rectify that as soon as possible. And—but there is a strict protocol in place where they don't ask about that. And if—on circumstances would—that was done, then that was done in error, and we would have to correct that immediately.

**Mr. Allum:** Okay. I appreciate that. And we do want to talk about the broad policy issue here. I'm not trying to get—I had to use the example to—as the premise for the question, but if—of course I don't want to get into specifics.

I don't recall whether my office has forwarded this to your office, but we may do that just to give you an update on what went down in that particular circumstance in case a reminder or memo needs to go out to staff about what the policy is and that it remains unchanged.

A third issue—again, it's a—casework, as we call it in our business. But I think it goes to a larger policy issue in this particular case. My office and yours, and you and I, have talked about it. It's a young man, suffers from autism. He's an adult. Through some interventions on your part, I think—much appreciated—he finally—after, I have to tell you, much difficulty for the family, finally entered into the PATH program, I believe it's called. Recently, we've—we're told that the individual in question was characterized—I'm using my language, not any other language—was characterized as being non-compliant and was told that his PATH file would be closed, and so any supports coming from PATH would end at the end of the month, as well as additional supports from a program—I think it's called Leaf—would also end, and it would fall back again on the family to provide supports for an adult child suffering from very difficult circumstances around autism.

So I wanted to ask a couple of questions around that. Is it appropriate—and maybe I have it wrong, so I want to put that out there—but is it appropriate for the worker involved with the individual to simply say, you're non-compliant; consequently, we're closing your file, with no consultation with the family or any of the support team that may have been around that particular individual?

**Mr. Fielding:** I do—I'm just getting some information from our department, but I—just to fill in the blanks, I guess, from a previous question you asked—and I'll reference this while we're looking for some of the appropriate answers. So—and I do want to correct the record. We actually have—for the security purposes, there's 44 staff total. The security is 32 staff, and communications staff, there's, like, over 12—12.2, I guess, in the call centre.

The total budget is \$3.9 million, and that's made up of 3.378—you know—yes—\$378,000 for security, and for the call centre, \$481,500. So that's—that makes up the security information.

And, Mr. Chair, I'll just wait to see if we can get a response back, make sure it's accurate for the next question on the individual case.

\* (12:10)

**Mr. Allum:** So on that final—on the final issue that I've raised, maybe the most appropriate way is for us to identify to your office what we've understood has taken place recently and see if there might be a—we're most concerned about an intervention to support this family and this young person, of course.

But I have to tell you, we're also concerned that in a circumstance where someone that's understood to be non-compliant—and again, I want to say those are my words, not anyone else's—whether this is a by-product of a budget cut to any of those programs that says, you know, if you find somebody that's non-compliant, this would help us reduce stress on the system, and we don't have enough money for it.

So I want to be sure and get the minister to confirm that there is not a budget issue in a circumstance like this. And perhaps—and that I'll relay the additional information that we under—have collected recently, so that the supports are available for this family and this young person.

**Mr. Fielding:** I can answer on the budgetary issue. We don't see that was—I don't think there's any changes at all in the budget area. These are

sometimes complex issues. You know, obviously, you know, probably not appropriate for us to get—and I know you're not suggesting we get into the case back and forth. They are complicated, and so what I'll endeavour to do is have our department get as much information as I can to you on the situation, so you can convey it to your constituent.

**Mr. Allum:** Yes, I'm going to turn it over to my friend from Assiniboia here for the remainder of the time we have in Estimates.

I want to thank the minister for the answers today and for the interaction that we have with this office. We understand that there are often incredibly complex situations in all cases and not simply resolved. It's important for all members of this Chamber to be able to work with your office in order to address those issues, and so we appreciate the degree that you've been able to do that.

And I would end by simply noting that Fred Tipping Place tenants association has rendered an invitation for you to come and personally visit there. I know Kerri Irvin-Ross, minister for CFS under our government, did come up, did visit with residents, did begin to understand their issues from their point of view. And so I want to put that on your—identify that for you, that the invitation's still open, love to have you come up sometime.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** I'd like to thank the opposition for allowing me the opportunity to ask a few questions.

Mr. Chair, the letter from Manitoba to the City of Winnipeg demanding that the City sell the property at 255 Hamilton originated from this minister. I wonder if the minister would table the letter that initiated the transfer of this property.

**Mr. Fielding:** I don't have the letter here, but that's something we could enter into the record. I believe the letter was also something that was included in the City Hall process that all residents probably saw through the debate that went on through City Hall for the land that you're talking about.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Thank you. In fact, many people have looked through City Hall, but they have not been able to find any such letter. So I appreciate the minister providing that letter.

Can the minister confirm that he signed that letter?

**Mr. Fielding:** I can. I can say that I'm supportive of the project.

**Mr. Fletcher:** And what project is that, sir?

**Mr. Fielding:** The project that is being discussed.

**Mr. Fletcher:** And what project is that?

**Mr. Fielding:** The project that was debated at City Hall.

**Mr. Fletcher:** And what was the name of that project?

**Mr. Fielding:** That the Scott Oake foundation support now. What the letter indicated is that we support the City's process of going through and looking at the land development. There's a lot of programs that are worthy that you're supportive—sometimes you support them financially; sometimes you support them on an individual basis. But I do support the notion of having some sort of a treatment centre in that area.

Now, with that being said, the land-use planning I can give you, because of my back experience in City Hall. I can clearly say that that is a land-use issue. And that's something that is decided at City Hall, and that process is under way. And just to clarify that, the one piece of business was there is not the end for the citizens. I think it's important that local citizens have an ability to have a say in that, and that process will go on.

What happens is when you change the zoning, and that wasn't about the zoning that came through City Hall; what the residents will have a say one way or the other is on whether that is appropriate use of the zoning, and what happens from a City Hall perspective and through their procedures and processes is if someone has an application project, then they would apply for the rezoning. There is an application that's drawn for the rezoning.

Generally, what happens—what City Hall whether it's—it has to or notionally—or generally just does, as a good rule of business, is that there's a community meeting that is held. I know there has been a number of community meetings held with this respect to this project, but that would be a requirement going forward where the community would have an ability to take a look at the project. If there's any changes to what has currently already been presented, there will be a City Hall report on whether it makes sense from a land-use perspective to support the rezoning process that happens. That's an ability for residents to come out and say it makes

sense or does not make sense from one area or not. That's a perspective that the community has, and then the area city councillors and ultimately City Hall makes the decision in terms of the land-use planning for that.

So that's the process that is going on and I'm, you know, as we go forward and the decisions are made, then I'm interested to see what decisions the City makes on it.

**Mr. Fletcher:** The members of the committee should have been consulted properly before the request was made and granted to transfer the land and to do so at \$1, below market value, is—makes a mockery of the system, the process, and it's disrespectful to the taxpayer.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask the minister another question—another topic.

In his portfolio, is he responsible for addiction services or any issues around addiction?

**Mr. Fielding:** It depends on your definition. There's—for the most part I would say the Minister of Health for the most part is in charge of addiction services. Now, depending on the type of, you know, individual vulnerable person that you're dealing with, and there's a whole bunch of different areas in our area, one being the CFS system, one being, you know, people with intellectual disabilities—there's a whole bunch of spectrum of people. So I would say, for the most part, that is a decision that the Ministry of Health generally makes. But to say that some young individuals that are in the CFS system there's wraparound services and supports and, of course, part of that is some of the treatments that an individual may need support from.

So, indirectly, that's a service that is provided to some of the children that are in care and potentially in other areas. But, for the most part, that's—it is a decision in terms of really the Department of Health would make for the most part.

\*(12:20)

**Mr. Fletcher:** Is his department responsible for the type of facility that he has initiated and supports, type of services, the Bruce Oake Foundation would provide. Is he—does that fall within his area of responsibility?

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, I would say, as a government MLA and as a member of Cabinet and as—and, quite frankly, as a citizen of Manitoba, you'd all hope that we provide appropriate services and supports for

people that are—that have addictions. So I would say, you know, just as a citizen, I'd want to ensure that services and supports are in place.

**Mr. Fletcher:** So the answer is no, it doesn't fall within your portfolio, but, collectively, as a society, we have a role. Fair enough, except it's not the role that you have as a minister. It's not in your mandate letter to deal with addiction. You—the assertion is it falls under Health. Well, we learned yesterday that the Health Ministry has nothing to do with the Bruce Oake Foundation or their program. Moreover, the back—the land has been transferred to the Manitoba renewal Crown corporation, and there are four principles, none of which this foundation falls under. So how can the housing corporation be responsible for an addiction foundation when it's not even within the scope of their mandate? And just so we're not wasting any time, I would like to provide the minister with the legislation governing the Crown corporation.

**Mr. Fielding:** Well, you know, look, clearly you've taken a position on, you know, the centre. That's your right as a representative. I can tell you clearly that the land-use planning, because I know from your comments, your public comments, that you support a treatment centre; you think it's a good idea. So I'm assuming that is support that is there. Really, it sounds like to me what you're concerned about is the land-use planning.

So I guess my advice back to you would be to, you know, generally, if you're—if you support a treatment centre and you support services and supports in that nature, and your arguments have been that you do support that centre or you do support a centre like that, it's just the location wasn't good, even though City Hall, as I understand it—I wasn't in the debate that made a decision on it—but I understand from the debate that there was two issues that you brought forward as an issue.

Number 1 was a recreational component, that they were going to lose recreational dollars. I can tell you that a part of that decision—what happens is when land is sold, some money goes into a land-operating reserve. So the concern was that St. James was going to lose out on that money. As I understand from the area city councillor that that money was replenished and that the money, you know, is whole for the people of St. James to use. So I understand that, probably, issue would be addressed from your original concern. The second issue was in terms of the green space, and, again, from a land-use

perspective at the City Hall, I understand that, you know, that the land that was—they made the decision on was based on that site and that the green space that is concerned, that you raised as a concern, isn't a concern anymore because the fact that all residents can use that space, and if I'm not mistaken—although it isn't my level of government, I don't exactly know all the final decisions on that—that that use of that land was taken out of the final decision.

So I guess that the two major points that you raise seem to be raised—seem to be addressed—but I'm not at that level of government. So I certainly can't speak to the land-use planning. I can tell you, as a former city councillor, that making land-use planning is important. It is extremely important and I can tell you when—there's nothing like having a controversial zoning at the end of your block for a city councillor to have to make some tough decisions on that front.

That decision was made. It was passed. Council is supreme and they made that final determination. What I think is important and I understand will happen is that the residents, whether you agree or disagree, and I think it's probably a 50-50 issue in around St. James, is they would have another say. And that's what I would support.

I would support that anyone has concerns with that project, that while there is rezoning that does take place, that they would have an opportunity to express that. And then, at that point, local councillors that are in charge of that—not provincial government or not federal government, but the city government that makes the decisions on land-use planning would be able to take that into consideration that they represent, and based on logic as opposed to us debating something where the land-use planning isn't something where a report, where information is brought forth from the city.

So I would suggest that that is a discussion that you should continue to bring up with the elected representatives of the City of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Fletcher:** The minister did not answer my question at all. My question was dealing with the Crown corporation, the Housing and Renewal Crown Corporation. I provided him the act.

The four pillars of its mandate are to enhance affordability, accessibility of adequate housing for Manitobans, particularly those of low and moderate incomes; maintain and improve conditions of existing house—of the housing stock; ensure the adequate supply of housing stock in Manitoba; and



to stimulate activities of the housing market on behalf of the benefit of Manitobans.

None of these provisions allow for an additions facility. It's not—the Crown corporation doesn't have the power to follow the science—or the science or enforce any kind of standard whatsoever.

I'd like to table, for the minister, the website, government website on this issue. I'd like to table for the minister the Bruce Oake finance plan, which is unbelievably weak when it comes to its business structure. Usually, when these things come forward, they—you know, I'm providing the minister, not the table.

I'd also like to provide the minister with a copy of my letter of January 21st or 25th, outlining some of the issues. City Council—the minister has talked about social impact bonds. I'd like to share with the

minister material that demonstrates the fact that those are very unproven. Even though it was my government, federally, that introduced them, none have really been acted on.

And also I'd like to present the minister with a ecologic study of the Sturgeon Creek basin, a hydrology study. And this is in good faith to the minister, so when the next opportunity arises, he will have material to allow us—

**Mr. Chairperson:** The hour being 12:30 p.m., the committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

#### IN SESSION

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Pivniuk):** The hour being 12:30, the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Friday, April 13, 2018**

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