

First Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee Reports? Tabling of Reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with the statement.

National Aboriginal Day

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): As the Minister responsible for Indigenous Relations, it gives me great pleasure to formally acknowledge that today is National Aboriginal Day.

As many of you are aware, National Aboriginal Day is held on June 21st of each year. This day serves as an important opportunity for indigenous and non-indigenous people to acknowledge, celebrate and learn about indigenous culture, heritage and perspectives, not only here in Manitoba but all across Canada.

This year's celebrations are particularly important given that 2016 marks the 20th anniversary of National Aboriginal Day celebrations.

Manitoba's indigenous people have and continue to make significant contribution to our province's social and economic fabric. It is these contributions that this day was intended to recognize.

Manitoba has been, and remains, very committed to working closely with indigenous people to move forward on important issues.

We also remain committed to improving our relationship with First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples so that we can all work together to build a prosperous Manitoba that provides opportunities for everyone in our province.

The Manitoba government today also became a partner of the Thompson Aboriginal Accord. Created in 2009, the accord is a living document

that recognizes the role of Aboriginal people in Thompson's history, and affirms the commitment of signatories to strengthened relationships with Aboriginal governments and peoples.

I would like to say a special thanks to all those who have worked so hard at organizing the many important events connected to this day.

I would also like to acknowledge everyone who worked so hard to have recognized this day nationally.

On this day, June 21st, 2016, I would like to acknowledge National Aboriginal Day and I wish to express my deep appreciation and respect to all indigenous people across Canada.

Our country's history and our future progress depends on the contributions and efforts of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, particularly here in Manitoba.

I encourage you to find time to attend one or more amazing events planned for today and I look forward to visiting King Edward Community School this afternoon for their grand opening and dedication of their Sacred Heart Garden project to remember residential school survivors and their families.

Once again, it's my privilege and honour and an honour to acknowledge this important day.

Thank you. Ekosi. Miigwech.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Today marks National Aboriginal Day, where Canadians celebrate indigenous history, culture and identity. In Manitoba, we proudly showcase the major contributions that Aboriginal peoples have made and continue to make to our province.

I always think it's fitting that National Aboriginal Day occurs in the summer, at a time when many of our indigenous students are graduating and beginning their careers as leaders in our province. Recently I was honoured to attend the UCN graduation at the The Pas campus. As I congratulated our graduates, the most in UCN's history, I thought about the impact investments in education and training has made on the futures of our Aboriginal youth. Education gives Aboriginal young

people the tools to live healthy, fulfilled lives and make us stronger as a province.

National Aboriginal Day is an important time to reflect on where we have come from, where we are and where we're going. As Aboriginal people, and as Canadians, it's a time to tell our stories and successes, and it's a time to demonstrate the strength and the resiliency of our people.

A year after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner's report and the former premier's apology for the tragedy of the '60s scoop, Manitobans are working to tear down the stereotypes that divide us and move forward on the path to reconciliation.

But there's still more to do. As we work to overcome the generational effects of colonization, displacement, racism and systemic discrimination, we will continue to draw attention to the struggles that indigenous communities are still experiencing, including missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Our NDP caucus is proud to have strong, dynamic, indigenous MLAs who use our experiences, perspectives and traditions to help shape legislation. We will continue to stand up for the rights of indigenous Manitobans and push the government to make inclusive policy and investments and supports for indigenous families. We are proud to be part of a thriving province, rich in indigenous history and community, and we today join others in celebrating our place at the heart of Canadian society.

Thank you.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the ministerial statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave?
[Agreed]

Ms. Klassen: This morning I attended the Four Arrows first annual Indigenous Food Sovereignty Summit. Today is Canada's National Aboriginal Day. My treaty card identifies me as a status Indian. Going back generations, my family are Natives to Canada. This is our homeland.

There are many terms used to describe my people and, personally, I'm okay with most; that is not to say that's the same for all of my people, so please be sensitive as to the term which they prefer.

My people's identity as the First Peoples of this nation is still in its infancy. There are many communities that are only beginning to explore their history, their unique customs and cultures. This is—the one steadfast component we have not largely lost is our connection to the land and how we are still hunter-gatherers.

One of Canada's policies was to kill the Indian in the child and, in turn, it killed our culture, our language and our history. It is through our brave people whom took our ways and our traditions underground and hid them that have we—that we have retained this vital knowledge. Many of us are now learning what a magnificent and beautiful culture we all share. We must come together to nourish it and grow it back into what it once was.

In honour of the village we once had, I humbly ask you all to partake in one of the many Aboriginal Day celebrations occurring in our great province, and you will see our vitality, you will feel our mother's heartbeat in our drum.

Miigwech, tansi, ekosi, mahseecho, thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Support for Fort McMurray Graduates

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to honour in the Legislature today three young Manitoba women who have spent the last few weeks collecting grad dresses to be shipped to Fort McMurray to be given to graduates who have lost theirs in the wildfires this spring.

After seeing images of the devastation coming out of Fort McMurray earlier this spring, Celeste Petrick from Sarto, Julia Plett from Blumenort and Mia Prenevault selflessly decided to do something to help those in need and made it their mission to collect as many grad dresses as possible to send to Alberta. Earlier this month, they collected 121 dresses, and the offers of donations keep coming with many Manitoban mothers asking if they can contribute bridesmaid dresses.

It was very important to Celeste, Julia and Mia that the 17- and 18-year-olds who lost everything in the fires could forget their life-altering challenges for a single night and just go back to being a normal high school graduate.

Community support for what these young women are doing has been outstanding. In fact, Steve's Livestock located in Blumenort has agreed to

pay all the shipping costs for the dresses to go to Alberta. For the 121 dresses they have collected so far, the shipping costs will be well over \$700. These fine young Manitobans have been working with the Cinderella Project out of Calgary where the dresses will be shipped to, before being sent to Fort McMurray for the graduation scheduled for September.

* (13:40)

On behalf of the Manitoba Legislature, thank you for your generosity, your kindness and your compassion for those in need. You have demonstrated to the rest of Canada the best of what Manitoba and what Manitobans are.

Colleagues, please join me in recognizing Celeste and Mia who are with us here today in the gallery.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty Summit

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, it's hard to say you're sovereign if you can't feed your people. That's the title of the keynote speech at the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Summit which starts today. The summit is a part of a cultural reclamation that's been taking place where indigenous peoples have been decolonizing their food supply.

Over the next three days, the Four Arrows Regional Health Authority is hosting the summit. From homegrown chickens to gardens to fair trade fish, Four Arrows has been working with its member First Nations. For over 10 years they've helped to create local food movements across the country, helping to rebuild First Nations sovereignty.

Each of our five historic First Nations along with the Metis Nation are represented at the food summit: The Dene, the Dakota, the Cree, the Ojibwa, the Oji-Cree will share their food stories and insight into their food culture.

Madam Speaker, indigenous food sovereignty means that indigenous peoples are moving back to growing their own food, reconnecting to their food sources and the traditional lands they grow from. It's a look back at our food practices our communities used for centuries while looking forward to reclaim our food identities.

Byron Beardy, Food Security Co-ordinator at Four Arrows, has travelled all across Turtle Island talking about indigenous food culture. He has witnessed first-hand the people's desire to reconnect

to their food systems. He believes it's time to share stories that help reignite the fire within our communities.

Madam Speaker, the traditional food that nourished indigenous people—from bannock to blueberries to salmon to moose—is part of indigenous culture. That makes it a part of our language, our ceremonies and our traditional teachings. For the First Nation and Metis people of Manitoba, this looks different from place to place, from nation to nation, but it's the time to start sharing these practices and learning the food ways of our people.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Seven Oaks MET School

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a unique school with an equally unique program: the Seven Oaks Met School. Seven Oaks Met School opened in September 2009 and engages students through creative, challenging academic work and internships that provide real world learning experiences.

Met School partners with Garden City Collegiate for physical education, music programs, advanced sciences and extracurricular activities, but they still have their own mascot, Go Squirrels.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Met School students have standard curriculum classes at their brand new stand-alone facilities at 640 Jefferson, but on Tuesdays and Thursdays, students explore their interests through examining career connections, develop resumes and interview skills and arrange to interview people who work in the field of their interest.

With their advisors and parents, students find internship placements in the community with projects related to their curriculum. Met students intern at universities, colleges, local businesses, have screened documentaries in multiple international film festivals and launched their careers directly from high school.

Met students have received \$36,600 in scholarships in the last five years, with 45 graduates to date. As of September 2016, the Met School will have eight advisers—teachers—and 120 students.

Met School is also the recipient of the Canadian Education Association's Ken Spencer Award for Innovation in Teaching and Learning for demonstrating a commitment to engaging the hearts and minds of adolescent learners through successful and

sustainable initiatives to develop—to deeply develop, engage students in the learning process.

Education is not written in stone, instead it is a conversation. This conversation is well served with new and innovative ways to study. Met School provides an opportunity for young people to learn in new ways in the pursuit of bettering themselves and their community.

Madam Speaker, I ask leave of the House to have the Met School class of 2016 entered into the record.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to enter their names into the record? *[Agreed]*

Met School 2016 Grads: Erwin Andaya, Carlo Capobianco, Sarah Carr, Brent Fisher, Alexandra Friesen, Mack Gatti, Jeremy Hrnjeki, Jamie Lee Hubka, Dana Krueger, Wencke Rudi, Alyssa Stoughton, Richard Varkerti

Aboriginal Education in Manitoba

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): The Louis Riel School Division recognizes the need to engage in deeper learning with our indigenous communities. They look to provide a guide for living and learning together to form an inclusive and accepting learning community.

The Seven Teachings, values that traditionally have formed the basis of a healthy indigenous lifestyle are incorporated into many of its schools. LRSD has begun a new initiative by developing mentorship groups where high school students spend half a year with elders, and in teachings that focus on culture and leadership from indigenous perspectives. High school groups are then matched with an elementary school where they become the leaders and share knowledge and friendship with the younger students. Through this program, students see themselves as leaders and role models.

They have also begun to look at indigenous language programming. The TRC recommendations point to the reclamation of indigenous languages and, next year, they will begin with basic indigenous languages in some of the elementary schools.

Louis Riel School Division is working hard to provide opportunities to connect students to their language and culture. On Monday, June 13th, I was invited to attend the first annual graduation powwow at Dakota 'collegian'. This was a celebration of graduates, culture and the LRSD and its surrounding community. Dancers and drummers from across the

province participated. This powwow was a way to honour indigenous and non-indigenous graduates, celebrate diversity and acknowledge the community's commitment to indigenous students and families. LRSD wants its students to be proud and to be celebrated for their accomplishments.

Madam Speaker, may I turn your attention to the Louis Riel School Division's Aboriginal education co-ordinator, Corey Kapilik, and Superintendent Duane Brothers, who are in the gallery with us today. Please join me in congratulating them on the work they do to make LRSD a leader in the field of Aboriginal education in Manitoba.

Miigwech, merci, thank you.

Summer Festivities in Manitoba

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Although we have already experienced summer weather and its warmth for a couple of months, yesterday marked the first official day of summer, formally known as the summer solstice.

I have fond memories, and I know that there are many more to come, of enjoying Manitoba summers. Whether it be relaxing with friends at the beach with bonfires, attending the many cultural events our province has to offer or my favourite summer activity, dirt biking, Manitoba does not fall short of offering us plenty of fun in the sun. I can think of many unique activities and festivals that cater to the interest of Manitobans.

For example, today is Aboriginal Day, which means there are festivities occurring all day long. For those who enjoy the thrill of rides, the Red River Exhibition is still open until this Sunday. Later this month, country music fans will commute to Dauphin for Canada's longest running country music festival, Countryfest. And one of my favourite festivals that I have attended as long as I can remember is 'Folkorama'. This two-week display in August allows us to embrace the diversity of Winnipeg's cultural makeup.

Summer's also a chance to simply enjoy being outside and take in the nature. In Burrows, the NorWest Co-op Community Food Centre gives the community the chance to use the green thumb through the drop-in garden. This initiative is great for our community, teaching those interested how to grow their own garden while promoting locally grown foods.

Madam Speaker, whether it be catching a Goldeyes game, experiencing the dinosaur exhibit at the zoo, I encourage all Manitobans to take advantage of what Manitoba has to offer this summer season. I'm sure we can all agree that our beautiful summers do not last long enough.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today students from Met School, accompanied by their principal, Nancy Janelle, and teacher Rory Brett, who are the guests of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry).

Also in the gallery, we have with us today Brigitta Schuler and Lorianne Dueck, who are the guests of the honourable member of Crown Services and, I believe, family members.

And, also in the public gallery, from Red River College Language Training Centre, 25 adult English language students, under the direction of Janice Ching, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome all of you here today.

* (13:50)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Canada Pension Plan Expansion Manitoba Seniors

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): One of the most important universal social programs for Manitobans is the Canada Pension Plan. Just yesterday, there was a historic agreement between the federal government and the eight provinces to significantly improve benefits under the CPP. Quebec has its own program through the Quebec Pension Plan.

Manitobans were shocked and embarrassed to see the Premier and this government refusing to be part of an agreement that will significantly improve pension benefits. Last week, the Premier literally turned his back on Mrs. McGregor, a senior who wanted to talk to him about his clawback of seniors' property tax credits.

Why is the Premier turning his back on future generations of Manitoba seniors by refusing to support badly needed pension reform?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, on April 19th, Manitobans turned their back on a political party that raided their pocketbooks with regular joy, it seemed, on their part.

Manitobans elected a new government that will stand up for them and with them and assist them in achieving their financial goals. This is a partnership that needs to be developed, and this is an opportunity to develop that partnership, Madam Speaker, and we look forward to doing that.

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

Ms. Marcelino: New Democrats are proud of our history and tradition in fighting for fair pension benefits.

Manitobans, like J.S. Woodsworth and Stanley Knowles, were leaders in the fight of the CCF and NDP for a universal pension system. In the last provincial election, we were the only party to fight for CPP expansion. The Premier talked negatively about CPP reform in the context of him having been an investment adviser in the private sector. The Manitoba Liberal leader spoke out against CPP reform.

We as Manitoba New Democrats are going to fight for pension reform in Manitoba and in Canada.

Why won't this Premier stand up for Manitoba and support a fair deal for Manitoba seniors?

Mr. Pallister: Thank you to my colleague again, Madam Speaker, and to you for the opportunity to say that the only time that I have seen the NDP vigorously fight for pension benefits was for severance payments for disgruntled staffers who left the party. And the reality of the situation is quite different from that which the member describes.

In fact, in the 2011 provincial election, as I recall it, and the members may like to revise history, but as I recall and Manitobans recall, they went to every door in the city of Winnipeg and around the province. They knocked. They promised no tax hikes, and they delivered \$1 billion in tax increases.

Taking \$1 billion away from Manitobans that they did not have available to save for their own financial future is hardly a sincere indication of a genuine commitment to Manitobans' well-being.

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

Ms. Marcelino: This is the Premier and his party that four days before election said they won't claw back seniors' tax rebate.

Let's be clear, Madam Speaker. We're not reassured by the government—we're not reassured by this government's incompetence. The Premier's political friends in the federal Conservative Party oppose this deal. This is the party that under Stephen Harper saw pension reform as raising the retirement age to 67. We are not reassured that this government will work to preserve this deal.

Why won't the Premier recognize that when it comes to our seniors' pensions, Manitobans do not want a government that is most right-wing government in Canada? Why won't he recognize that Manitobans want a government that will stand up for Manitoba seniors and ensures a decent retirement for today's seniors and for generations of seniors to come?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Manitobans rejected the previous administration's attempt to be re-elected on the basis that they were so divided they couldn't even stand up for one another, let alone stand up for Manitoba seniors. We will stand up for Manitoba seniors.

This is a generational decision, it's an important debate, and we will participate in it fully. We are a newly elected government, but we will ensure in every decision that we take—and we will take our decisions thoughtfully—we will ensure that we stand up for the best interests of Manitoba's working families and seniors.

We want to make sure that Manitobans have the maximum ability to find their financial future and the security they deserve, Madam Speaker, not have it eroded as was the case over the last number of years by profligate spending by a dysfunctional and divided government that would raid their pocket-books so that it could get credit and put up billboards for spending money it had taken away from working Manitoba families.

That won't happen with this government. We will stand up for Manitobans. We will support Manitobans in their efforts to get a secure retirement.

Canada Pension Plan Expansion Government Position

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, you know the Finance Minister embarrassed Manitobans on the national stage

yesterday, but the Premier is only embarrassing himself today with the answers that he's given so far.

Last week I asked the Finance Minister what his position on—what his position was on expanding the CPP, and he either didn't know or he wouldn't say. And then yesterday he went to a meeting with Finance ministers and the federal Finance Minister in Vancouver and he still didn't know or he wouldn't say.

So we're going to try again today, Madam Speaker.

Can the Finance Minister tell us why he didn't join a strong national consensus yesterday to expand and enhance the CPP for all Canadians?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Yesterday in Vancouver, we undertook to study several important issues, including CPP enhancement. Manitoba was proud to be at that table. And the member will understand that there is no one group that did so much to limit the power of Manitobans to save for themselves as that previous NDP government.

We were proud to be there standing up for Manitobans and bringing our perspective to that table. Those were helpful discussions.

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

Mr. Allum: You know, two thirds of Canadians do not have pensions through their workplace. That means 11 million people will benefit from expanding the CPP here in Canada. Even if the—expanding the CPP doesn't fit in with the personal ideology of the Premier or the Minister of Finance, the Finance Minister is now making decisions on behalf of all the people of Manitoba, not just his friends in the business community.

Why won't the Finance Minister stand up for the rest of Manitobans, for families, for seniors, for women and minimum wage earners who rely on the CPP and fight for the retirement savings they deserve?

Mr. Friesen: Well, once again the member for Fort Garry-Riverview demonstrates that he won't let a small thing like accurate information stand in his way of asking inflammatory questions.

So the member doesn't seem to get it, that CPP is important and affordability in retirement is important, just like household affordability is right

now. And the member should acknowledge that there is a more sophisticated conversation that we are undertaking in this province.

The dialogue that we have with Manitobans matters. We put that first. We indicated in the room that for a government that's been in place for less than nine weeks, this presented a real challenge.

We will have that conversation with Manitobans. We will have that conversation around the Cabinet table. And we will get this right. It's too important not to get right.

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

Mr. Allum: You know, the Finance Minister showed up for the photo op, but he wouldn't stay for the press conference to explain to Manitobans why he refused to sign a strong national consensus on the CPP.

*(14:00)

This is not only good for Manitobans, it's good for all Canadians, and he has an obligation to stand in this House today and tell us why he refused to sign that agreement.

Manitobans want to know: What's the answer?

Mr. Friesen: Well, the member feigns indignation but his responses reveal how important it is to actually have an education approach on this. It really matters that we get it right. His responses show how important a piece of fiscal knowledge really is. CPP was never designed to be the whole answer for Manitobans when it was designed, when it was changed in the 1990s, and even now it's important for us to have the comprehensive discussion with Manitobans.

Manitobans care about the bills they have to pay now. They also care about having enough in retirement. This is the conversation that we will undertake to have, and we will expedite that conversation but we won't let the member's antics get in the way of that conversation that we will have with Manitobans.

Canada Pension Plan Expansion Minimum Wage Earners

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, minimum wage earners are more likely to be single parents, women and working full-time. Research shows that increasing minimum wage helps lift people out of poverty, it reduces the need for social

services, and they end up spending more, which, of course, helps strengthen our economy.

Will the minister agree that increasing the minimum wage will help these families today and expanding the CPP will help these families tomorrow?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I thank the member for the question because, again, as I've said other times in this House, affordability matters, and we know that our predecessors, the NDP government, did more to create hardship for Manitobans. As a matter of fact, I remind this same member who brings this question now that this will be the year in which Manitoba passes the threshold whereby the government will have received \$1 billion as a result of their ill-fated decision to raise the PST on all Manitobans.

He wants to talk about affordability? Let's talk about him raising the PST on all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Chief: We know Manitoba continues to have one of the strongest economies in the country with one of the lowest unemployment rates. A key part of that success is listening, having conversations with groups like single parents, women and those most impacted by the minimum wage and who often need support, the support of a strong, reliable Canadian pension plan.

Will the minister support the federal position on expanding the CPP so that these families can have a future that is bright?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I would repeat: Affordability really matters to Manitobans. It matters to Manitobans.

We must, of course, acknowledge this member doesn't seem to quite understand that the changes that would take place with CPP would not affect seniors that are retired now in Manitoba. This is a generational decision to take. It's about having adequate retirement for those who'll be entering retirement years from now. That's an important conversation to have and we don't deny that. We are going to be right in the centre of that conversation.

What we've done is taken a principled approach. For a government in place for less than nine weeks—and that was acknowledged around the table in Vancouver—it presents particular challenges. Whereby other jurisdictions had the opportunity to

benefit from discussions in their jurisdiction, we need to have those same conversations here.

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

Mr. Chief: The minister talks about affordability. He clearly knew about affordability when he gave himself a 36 per cent raise when he got into Cabinet. And his Premier (Mr. Pallister) gave himself a 39 per cent raise. We know that the raise that they gave themselves were clearly help them today. We know that that raise they gave themselves will brighten their future for tomorrow and their retirement.

So to be fair—to be fair—Madam Speaker, will the Premier, will this minister, agree to do the same thing for low-income Manitobans and increase the minimum wage and help them today, and will they expand the CPP to brighten their future for tomorrow as well?

Mr. Friesen: Well, the member's incorrect, and he knows full well that a commissioner sets compensation for members. If he advocates a different position, he should say so on the record.

But in respect of his question about affordability, Madam Speaker, I repeat that affordability matters. Talk about an ideological approach. This member understands full well that his government would raise the minimum wage while not indexing tax brackets, making sure that money would be—would continue to flow into their coffers.

We've raised indexing. We've made sure to keep more money in the hands of Manitobans not just this year but for every year thereafter going forward, more money for hard-working Manitobans.

MMIWG Families Meeting with Minister

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): On this National Aboriginal Day, I want to acknowledge Felicia Solomon-Osborne, 16 years old, from Norway House Cree Nation. In 2003, Felicia's mother, and grandmother Councillor Darlene Osborne, were given her leg and her arm that had washed ashore the Red River, almost 11 years earlier, in the exact same spot where Tina Fontaine's body was found wrapped in a blanket, weighted down with weights in a garbage bag.

Can the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations advise if she has met with MMIWG

families and whether she's met with the coalition of MMIWG families?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I acknowledge that there are many stories out there that have been going on for years and years and there will continue to be stories that are absolutely heartbreaking not just for the families but for all people of Manitoba because every person that has come to these kind of consequences in their life for whatever reason, it affects many people. There's a lot of families; there's a lot of friends. And that heartache doesn't go away in a day or a year or forever for these people.

We acknowledge that, and we have met with many indigenous leaders, and we will continue to meet as time allows. Their stories are important. Understanding how they feel is important.

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

Government Support

Ms. Fontaine: I will point out that these aren't stories. They're journeys and experiences that families live with every single day.

Two days ago, it was the eight-year anniversary of Jennifer Catcheway when she went missing. And as some of us do every year, we travelled to Portage la Prairie this past Saturday to offer emotional and financial support to her parents at their annual fundraising barbecue.

Jennifer went missing the day before she turned 18. Her mother, Pastor Bernice Catcheway, travels all over Manitoba looking for her daughter in garbage dumps, in swamps, in rivers and in thick bush.

Can the minister of indigenous and municipal affairs advise what support her department will be offering families like the Catcheways in their search efforts?

Ms. Clarke: I want to thank the member opposite for her comments as well as her question.

I'm very familiar with the Catcheway family story. I actually live in that area. And I think it is worth mentioning that they not only carry their own grief but they have been very instrumental and supportive of all families since that time and during the days. They actually came out again into my constituency just this past summer to help look for a missing boy. Those people continue to give to others,

and I think Manitoba is recognized as being a very giving community and a very giving province.

There is a lot of support out there, but the support doesn't change the circumstances. And we acknowledge that. And as a government, we also acknowledge that a lot of work needs to be done, and we need to prevent this happening more in the future.

* (14:10)

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

Appointment of Special Adviser

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I just want to advise that I've asked two questions and so far I haven't received any answers. And on any day of the year in which I ask a question in respect of MMIWG, today is the day to provide real and tangible answers.

There are hundreds of MMIWG families in Manitoba that, on top of dealing with the trauma of having a missing or murdered loved one, deal with a variety of other daily pressing issues. Often, MMIWG families need a direct link and support to navigate through government social services. MMIWG families across Manitoba are anxious as we all await the national inquiry.

Can the minister advise whether her government will appoint a special adviser on indigenous women's issues in support of MMIWG families?

Ms. Clarke: Again, I'd like to acknowledge the question asked. We are very support of ongoing work to be done. We realize that there's a lot of work to be done.

There are not answers that can be answered in one day. If they were, they would have been done by now. This is an ongoing—strategies have to be worked on. We have to work collaboratively, indigenous and nonindigenous people. We have to work with our police force. There are so many components that have to be involved. It has to be ongoing. We're very aware of that and we will continue to work.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Implementation of Recommendations

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission spent six years examining the damaging effects that the residential school era has had on our country. Many survivors have shown incredible resilience in the face of institutionalized racism, instances of mental

illness, intergenerational abuse, community and family breakdown and chronic poverty.

The report make clear—makes clear that it's up to all levels of government to address these issues with real action. Our former government took immediate action and passed The Path to Reconciliation Act which laid out a framework of how the TRC's recommendations will be implemented.

Will the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations tell the House which of the 94 calls to action she plans to take immediate action on?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank the member opposite for her question. Again, we have been meeting and we have been discussing and looking at these 94 recommendations going forward.

I was present and took part in the blanket ceremony that was held just a few weeks ago. There was a good turnout from the whole community, people listening to the story that was being told and trying to understand all the hardships that so many survivors of residential schools have gone through.

We will continue to work on the 94 recommendations and, again, it's going to have to be a collaborative effort and an ongoing effort.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Lathlin: A number of the commission's recommendations call on the provincial government to make significant improvements in access to health care for indigenous people, including increasing the number of Aboriginal health-care professionals and providers in our communities. Our former government was making steady strides in improving health-care options in northern Manitoba, especially with The Pas primary health-care clinic, but this government has admitted the project may be on the cutting board.

Will the minister of indigenous and municipal affairs admit that scrapping The Pas clinic would not only limit health-care access for residents of The Pas, OCN and surrounding communities but also undermines the recommendations of the TRC?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I appreciate the question from my friend from The Pas. We had a good discussion yesterday in Estimates committee

regarding the truth and reconciliation committee's recommendation regarding health.

I advised her at that time, and I'm pleased to advise the House, that a number of different things have been happening within the health-care department and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in terms of cultural education to ensure that those who are indigenous individuals who are in our health-care system are getting culturally appropriate care, and we'll continue that good work, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The report calls on provincial governments to take mediate-immediate action to address the disproportionate number of Aboriginal offenders in jails across Canada. They call on the Manitoba government to provide stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to crime for Aboriginal people and responds to the underlying causes of the offending.

This government has now cut \$35 million in funding to programs that help prevent crime and support communities.

Will the minister explain how she plans to reduce the number of Aboriginal offenders and create pathways out of crime for indigenous young people without funding prevention programs?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and of course, Madam Speaker, this is a multi-faceted issue. There are many departments that are involved with trying to ensure that young people have opportunities, that young people have opportunities to overcome struggles, that young people have opportunities to overcome obstacles that might be in their lives.

I hesitate to remind the member that the greatest growth of the population of our Aboriginal people within the provincial jail system happened when they were in government over the last 17 years.

Psychological Services Coverage Under Medicare

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, today there are a number of health-care issues which need urgent attention.

First, the state of mental health care in our province badly needs attention to prevent the high number of suicides, to prevent and treat the high

incidence of depression and to help those who are exposed to violent and traumatic situations.

The government has announced it will do a full review of mental health services in Manitoba. Manitoba Liberals have been strong supporters of putting critical psychological services under medicare.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) be considering putting critical psychological services under medicare as we do for physician services?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Thank my friend from River Heights for the question. We had a good discussion about this yesterday.

As I indicated to him yesterday afternoon, the government will be moving forward with a combined mental health and addictions strategy. We believe that those two should be done together because there is certainly a correlation between those two issues.

If the member for River Heights has good ideas when that process comes forward, we're always open to good ideas. We don't believe anybody has a monopoly on good ideas, and we're open to hearing his, Madam Speaker.

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

Diabetes Rates Reduction Plan

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for that opening.

Second, as Health Minister, he knows we have a diabetes epidemic. It's raging out of control in our province. It's having widespread impact and is currently in Manitoba directly affecting more than 100,000 Manitobans.

And yet, the minister is driving blindly into this raging epidemic without a clear province-wide plan. The status quo is not acceptable.

When will the government put forward and implement a new and much more effective approach to addressing the diabetes epidemic we have right now?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, the member is not incorrect on one point. Certainly, we do have a significant issue when it comes to diabetes in the province of Manitoba. We've talked

about the challenges in terms of not only prevention but also ensuring that there's dialysis in the proper places.

I can tell him clearly that it's not going to be made any easier if we don't have support from our federal friends in Ottawa, Madam Speaker, and the federal government doesn't decide to come to the table with clear funding, clear and consistent funding as has been done in the past few years. That is going to be much harder.

Maybe he could use some of his pent-up energy to speaking to his friends in Ottawa to make sure that that happens, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The honourable member for River Heights, on a final supplementary.

Dedicated Stroke Unit Government Plan

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The minister needs to pay attention to the provincial responsibility, and there is actually a lot of federal dollars flowing to this government right now.

While the government knows full well that a dedicated stroke unit is urgently needed to reduce the morbidity and mortality from this dreaded condition, the minister acknowledged yesterday that the stroke unit was not on his long and ambitious list of projects which he is currently proceeding with.

Further, in two months, there has been no announcement and no clear date or plan with timelines put forward by the government.

* (14:20)

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) indicate today what the plan of action is and what the timeline is for the establishment of the dedicated stroke unit here in Manitoba?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, there's so many inaccuracies I'm going to have to ask for leave to answer that question.

Certainly it is on our plan to do the dedicated stroke unit, and what he asked yesterday is what's currently under construction. I'm sure if we'd started construction within four weeks of a dedicated stroke unit the member would be going around saying we didn't have proper consultation.

At the beginning part of his question, he indicated that the federal government doesn't have responsibility for health care. Well, that's not true. They certainly have funding responsibility.

I'm asking him to phone Ottawa and have some effort to try to ensure that that funding is maintained and increased at the level it needs to be so that the diabetes epidemic can be properly addressed in Manitoba. Get on the phone instead of just coming here and complaining.

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Funding Increase

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, Manitoba's lakes and rivers are vital to tourism and economic growth. Aquatic invasive species can severely impact aquatic habitats, fisheries, recreation and water-related infrastructure. It's so important to work together and take the precautions to stop the spread of species like zebra mussels.

Could the Minister of Sustainable Development inform the House of the steps our government is taking to work together with stakeholders and other provinces to stop the threat of aquatic invasive species?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sustainable Development): I'd like to thank the member from Swan River for this very important question.

Our government is committed to protecting our lakes and rivers and preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. Ensuring our anglers, tourists and all Manitobans enjoy our lakes well into the future is important to this government.

I am proud to advise all members in this House that our government has significantly increased funding from the AIS prevention program to \$698,000, a major increase from last year's budget of \$168,000. Our government is increasing in communications and enhanced our AIS awareness campaign to ensure all Manitobans and all visitors clean, drain, dry and dispose rules whenever their watercraft, trailers and equipment exit a body of water. For the first time—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Canada Pension Plan Expansion Manitoba Seniors

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, seniors in this province spend their lives working

hard with the expectation that they'll be able to enjoy their retirement and not have to worry about basics like paying the bills or putting food on the table.

This government has shown they just don't understand the pressures seniors face when one of their first moves was, as a government, was to claw back the seniors' tax rebate. Now they've had the opportunity to stand up for seniors on the national level and they blew it.

Will the Minister responsible for Seniors stand up to his Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Finance Minister and tell them to get on board with the rest of Canada?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, that member had the opportunity to get off board with the rest of his caucus in the summer of 2013 when they decided to increase the PST on every senior, on every Manitoban right across this province. In fact, they increased the costs on virtually everything in Manitoba. Madam Speaker, he had the opportunity then to stand up for seniors. He didn't do it.

We sat here all summer; we sat here in the fall. We did it as a caucus led by our Premier because we were standing up for Manitobans. We're still doing it today.

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

Mr. Wiebe: This minister needs to listen to the question. We're talking about seniors here and we're talking about seniors who have to make those difficult decisions between paying their bills, buying food or buying their medication for the month. An increase to the CPP would take away some of those pressures. It would make those decisions a little bit easier and it would build a strong foundation for seniors to enjoy a well-earned and fulfilling retirement.

This minister failed to stand up to his Premier when he took the cheques right out of the mailboxes of seniors in this province.

Will he now stand up and join with the rest of the country in making sure that seniors get what they've earned?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'm not sure what this member thinks that seniors do or where they live. They actually live, most of them, in homes, homes that had PST applied to their home insurance under this member, Madam Speaker. Many of these seniors

would actually like to take a little bit of a vacation once in a while, and those seniors had an increase of PST put on them, Madam Speaker. The—seniors are buying all sorts of things across the province and they are paying more every day—every day—every day—because this member wouldn't stand up to his premier and to his caucus when they increased the PST.

We stood up then. We stood up now. We're going to stand up tomorrow, every day, for seniors.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, every day, seniors are calling my office saying that this Premier campaigned on maintaining the seniors' tax rebate, and once he got their votes, he clawed it back just to fit their fiscal fiction. Now he's failing them once again by not working with the other provinces to just simply provide a basic deal for seniors in this country.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Wiebe: When these members were in opposition, they said we should follow the lead of our western neighbours. Well, Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC and the rest of Canada are all on board.

When will they get the message?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Manitobans got the message when the NDP were in government. They got the message that each and every year, taxes were going to go up. Each and every year, the hydro was going to go up. Each and every year, they were going to pay more, Madam Speaker. Manitobans were hoping to have a freedom-55 program, and under the NDP they tried to turn it into freedom 95.

Canada Pension Plan Expansion Low-Income and Senior Women

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Senior women are twice as likely to live in poverty as men, and 30 per cent of them rely on OAS and GIS benefits for their total income as compared to only 18 per cent of senior men. The reality is women earn less over their lifetime, work longer hours for lower paying jobs that offer little or no pension. These senior women earned less than men and shouldered most of the responsibility for caregiving, meaning that they often had to interrupt their careers or work part time.

Will the Minister of Finance concede his rejection of the CPP expansion will keep many senior women in a cycle of poverty and does nothing alleviate the burden of the pay gap on working Manitoba families?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): First of all, I'd offer this clarification to the member, and that is, she's wrong. In no way does the position that we've taken reflect any kind of negation of options. It's quite the opposite, actually, Madam Speaker.

What we've said, clearly, is that this is too important of an issue to race in. It is an issue that requires our full attention. It requires consultation. It requires listening to Manitobans. And the Manitobans that I've spoken to have said, take the time to get this right. We are reflecting that request in the activities that we will now undertake in respect of this.

Affordability in retirement matters. Affordability for all Manitobans matters. They could have done so much more for Manitobans in the last 17 years.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I'm curious who this government will be consulting with. These challenges will remain for the next-generation workers as well, as young women in Manitoba are still more likely to work for low-paying jobs, part time, that still don't offer a pension plan.

This government has no plan to address the growing need for more child-care spaces and is refusing to invest in public-centre-based child care, doubling the fees and making life even less affordable for young mothers. This government has failed to invest in women's health care, failed to 'provort' accessible and affordable care.

Will the minister admit that his government's decision to reject the CPP reform and ignore public child care financially marginalizes young—

* (14:30)

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I just encourage the members opposite to get their act together on these positions they're taking.

The leader on the other side of the House has said she supports our position of putting in the hands of low-income seniors the full education tax rebate

which we've maintained from the previous year for those very people that the member from St. Johns has just—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —raised in her preamble. The member for Concordia so obviously doesn't even understand the basics of how CPP works and the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) the same. That they actually talk about handouts coming from—*[interjection]* They actually talk about money coming from Ottawa to support Manitobans.

Fundamentally, Madam Speaker, I encourage the members opposite to do a little bit of research and understand that CPP is a vehicle for saving for retirement that is funded solely by the contributors. The money comes from Manitoba workers; it comes from Manitoba small-business employers. These people fund these programs. This is what we're deliberating upon.

The impact on Manitobans of the major tax hikes imposed by the previous administration is being felt today by Manitobans at all income levels. We need a plan that works for Manitobans. That's what this government will develop. The previous government forgot about Manitobans, just thought about itself.

Madam Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Minimum Wage—Annual Increase

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the reasons for this petition are as follows:

To urge the provincial government to commit to raising the minimum wage on consistent annual basis so that all hard-working Manitobans can provide for their families.

And this petition is signed by many, many fine Manitobans.

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

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

Thousands of Manitobans are reliant on minimum wage jobs.

Raising the minimum wage is one of the most effective means of raising employment, Manitobans–employed Manitobans above poverty line.

Increasing the minimum wage on a consistent, incremental basis puts more money in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans.

Mandating the increase in regular intervals allows business and families to plan and budget accordingly.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to commit to raising the minimum wage on a consistent, annual basis so that all hard-working Manitobans can provide for their families.

This petition is submitted–or, signed by A. Rothney, B. Crothers and H. Schellenberg and many other hard-working Manitobans.

Bell's Purchase of MTS

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

The background of the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

(Continued)

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): House business, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to announce the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Tuesday, June 28, 2016, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 3, The Mental Health Amendment Act, and Bill 5, The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Tuesday, June 28, 2016, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 3, The Mental Health Amendment Act, and Bill 5, The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act.

Mr. Goertzen: On further House business, Madam Speaker, would you canvass the House and see if there's leave to set aside the Estimates of Executive Council tomorrow, June 22nd, to be replaced with the Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations, with the changes to be in effect for tomorrow only.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to set aside the Estimates of Executive Council tomorrow, June 22nd, to be replaced with the Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations, with the change to be in effect for tomorrow only? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the House, Madam Speaker.

Would you further canvass the House to see if there's leave to move the Estimates of the Department of Families from the Chamber into room 255 permanently and for the Estimates of the Department of Families to commence upon completion of the Estimates of the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to move the Estimates of the Department of Families from the Chamber into room 255 permanently and for the Estimates of Department of Families to commence upon completion of the Estimates of the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the House, Madam Speaker.

Can you please canvass the House to see if there's leave to bring forward a sessional order outlining House business and House scheduling for the remainder of the spring sitting session and for the fall and November sittings?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to bring forward a sessional order outlining House business and House scheduling for the remainder of the spring sittings session and for the fall and November sittings? [Agreed]

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the House, Madam Speaker.

And I move, seconded by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway),

THAT the following sessional order applies until December 2, 2016, despite any other rule or practice of the House.

And if there's—and I'm also asking if there's leave at this time to dispense with the reading of the text of the sessional order, given that copies are being provided to all members with the understanding that the full text of the sessional order will appear in Hansard and in the Votes and Proceedings.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave at this time to dispense with the reading of the text of the sessional order, given that copies are being provided to all members with the understanding that the full text of the sessional order will appear in Hansard and in the Votes and Proceedings? [Agreed]

It has been moved by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), seconded by the honourable member for Elmwood,

THAT the sessional order that applies until December 22nd, 2016, despite any other rule or practice of the House—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense? Dispense. Thank you.

THAT the following Sessional Order applies until December 2, 2016 despite any other rule or practice of this House.

Sitting Schedule for June, 2016

1. Subject to the following, the House shall sit during its usual sitting hours until June 30, 2016:

(a) *On Wednesday, June 22, 2016, the House shall sit until 6:00 pm to consider departmental estimates.*

(b) *On Thursday, June 23, 2016, the House shall consider departmental estimates during the morning sitting. Private Members' Business shall not be considered. In the afternoon, the House shall sit until 6:00 p.m. to consider departmental estimates.*

(c) *On Friday, June 24, 2016, the House shall sit to consider departmental estimates from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. or until the 100-hour limit for the business of supply expires, whichever occurs first.*

(d) *On Monday, June 27, 2016, the House shall consider the concurrence motion in Committee of Supply.*

(e) *On Tuesday, June 28, 2016, the House shall consider the concurrence motion in Committee of Supply in the morning. Private Members' Business shall not be considered. In the afternoon, the House shall sit until 6:00 pm to consider the concurrence motion in Committee of Supply.*

(f) *On Wednesday, June 29, 2016, the House shall sit until 6:00 p.m. to consider the concurrence motion in the Committee of Supply.*

(g) *On Thursday, June 30, 2016 the House shall sit from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon to consider and conclude the concurrence motion in Committee of Supply.*

Matters to be complete before adjournment on June 30, 2016

2. The House is to not see the clock or adjourn until the following matters are completed on June 30, 2016:

(a) *Report Stage, Concurrence and Third Reading of any Government Bill reported to the House by June 29, 2016;*

(b) *all stages, including Concurrence and Third reading, for passage of the Main and Capital Supply Bills;*

(c) *all stages, including Concurrence and Third reading, for passage of Bill (No. 11) – The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2016/Loi d'exécution du budget de 2016 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité;*

- (d) all steps necessary to complete the Budget Process;
- (e) Royal Assent for all government Bills that have received Concurrence and Third reading.

Points of Order and Matters of Privilege are to be set aside until these matters have been completed, and any divisions related to the above matters must not be deferred.

Adjournment on June 30, 2016

3. The House will adjourn without motion on June 30, 2016 and stand adjourned until October 3, 2016, unless called earlier by the Speaker.

Fall Sitings

4. The House shall sit from October 3 to November 10, 2016 (the "Fall Sitings") and, subject to paragraphs 5 to 8, shall sit during its usual sitting hours.

Completion of Second Reading of Government Bills introduced on or before June 15, 2016

5. Government Bills that were introduced in the House on or before June 15, 2016 shall have the question put on Second Reading motions on or before October 13, 2016. For that purpose, the following applies on October 13, 2016.

- (a) If the Second Reading motion has not yet been moved, the Minister is to move the motion, with the Minister, the Official Opposition Critic and one Independent Member each having the opportunity to speak for 10 minutes, followed by an up to 15 minute question and answer period for each Bill.
- (b) The House shall not see the clock until all such Second Reading questions have been put.
- (c) Points of Order and Matters of Privilege are to be set aside until the Second Reading questions have been put.
- (d) Divisions on these motions cannot be deferred.

Completion of Committee Stage of Government Bills introduced on or before June 15, 2016

6. Committee stage on these Government Bills are to be completed no later than November 3, 2016. The following rules apply to any Committee sitting on November 3, 2016 to consider such Bills.

- (a) The Committee shall not rise until clause by clause is completed and the questions to report the Bills have been put to the Committee.
- (b) If the Committee has not completed public presentations, it must close public presentations by 9:00 p.m. By unanimous consent the deadline can be extended to 10:00 p.m. The public has the ability to provide written submissions for an additional 24 hours.
- (c) At 11:00 p.m. any member of the Committee who wishes to move an amendment to a Bill must file 20 copies of the amendment with the Clerk of the Committee, and the Clerk must distribute the amendment to members of the Committee. After that time, an amendment may be moved only if copies of it were filed with the Clerk and distributed as required by this rule.
- (d) At midnight, the Chair of the Committee must interrupt the proceedings and, without further debate or amendment (other than an amendment distributed as required by paragraph (c)), put every question necessary to complete clause-by-clause consideration of the Bills under consideration.
- (e) The committee must report the Bills to the House at its next sitting. In the event that the Committee fails to report the Bills at that sitting, the Bills are deemed to be reported to the House, as amended by the Committee (if applicable) and the report is deemed to be received by the House at that sitting.

Points of Order and Matters of Privilege are to be set aside until clause by clause consideration of the Bills has been completed and the questions to report the Bills have been put to the Committee.

Completion of Report Stages of Government Bills introduced on or before June 15, 2016

7. Report Stage on these Government Bills are to be completed on or before November 9, 2016. For that purpose, the following rules apply on November 9, 2016.

- (a) The House is to not see the clock or adjourn until the Speaker has put the question on all applicable Report Stage Amendments.

- (b) *If by 3:30 p.m. Routine Proceedings has not concluded, the Speaker must terminate Routine Proceedings and proceed to Orders of the Day.*
- (c) *At 4:00 p.m. the Speaker will interrupt debate and put all questions on the remaining applicable Report Stage Amendments with no further debate or amendment.*
- (d) *If any applicable Report Stage Amendments have not been moved, the sponsor(s) of the Amendment(s) are to move the Report Stage Amendments without debate.*
- (e) *Points of Order and Matters of Privilege are to be set aside until all votes are completed.*
- (f) *Divisions on Report Stage Amendments for these Bills cannot be deferred.*

Completion of Concurrence and Third Reading for Government Bills introduced on or before June 15, 2016

8. *The questions for Concurrence and Third Readings on these Government Bills are to be put on or by November 10, 2016. For that purpose, the following rules apply on November 10, 2016.*

- (a) *The House is to not see the clock or adjourn until all such questions have been put and Royal Assent has been granted.*
- (b) *If by 3:30 p.m. Routine Proceedings has not concluded, the Speaker must terminate Routine Proceedings and proceed to Orders of the Day.*
- (c) *At 4:00 p.m. the Speaker will interrupt debate and put all questions on the remaining Bills with no further debate or amendment.*
- (d) *If Concurrence and Third Reading motions have not been moved, Ministers are to move the motions without debate or amendment.*
- (e) *Points of Order and Matters of Privilege are to be set aside until all votes are completed.*
- (f) *Divisions on Concurrence and Third Reading for these Bills cannot be deferred.*

Commencement of the Second Session of the 41st Legislature

9. *The Second Session of the 41st Legislature shall begin on Monday, November 21, 2016 with the presentation of the Speech from the Throne.*

Usual sitting hours for November Sittings

10. *The House shall sit during its usual sitting hours from November 21, 2016 until December 2, 2016 (the "November Sittings").*

Completion of the Address in Reply debate

11. *The votes required to complete consideration of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne must be held no later than December 2, 2016. If the votes are held on December 2, 2016, the House is to not see the clock or rise before these votes are concluded.*

Opposition and Independent Members

12. *From the beginning of the Fall Sittings to the end of the November Sittings, the House shall:*

- (a) *Consider three Opposition Day Motions sponsored by Members of the Official Opposition.*
- (b) *Debate at Second Reading and vote on three Private Members' Bill sponsored by Members of the Official Opposition.*
- (c) *Debate at Second Reading and vote on one Private Members' Bill sponsored by an Independent Member.*
- (d) *Debate and vote on one Private Members' Resolution sponsored by an Independent Member.*

Madam Speaker: Is the member speaking to the motion?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes. Just briefly, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). Just by explanation, the House will know that there were rules that were put in place with the previous election that were also spearheaded by the member for River Heights and the former member for Kildonan, Mr. Chomiak. Those rules didn't govern the spring election possibility because in our legislation the pattern is to have a fall election, and so this particular agreement needed to be struck to govern this period before the full effect of the rules would start later this year. And I appreciate the opportunity to work with the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

* (14:40)

Madam Speaker: Any further debate on the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is the motion moved by the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen).

Is it the will of the House to accept the motion?
[Agreed]

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Would the House please resolve into Committee of Supply?

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for Executive Council. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Deputy Chair, you're doing a fine job. I can say that as someone who had to sit in that chair for more than a few hours in our previous iteration down in this building.

My question for the Premier is, first one—start pretty simple—is \$4,000 a lot of money?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I suppose it would depend on the circumstances, what one needed to buy at the time, or if one was coming from a place where I came from of relatively modest circumstances. I think it would depend on the time of life or the financial circumstances of the person who—I don't know. The member would have to elaborate a little bit more on who the person was because it would

depend, I suppose, on their circumstances whether it was a lot or not much or, you know, I don't how to answer that.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, thank you for that. If, let's say, your income is roughly around \$13,000 a year, would \$4,000 be a lot of money?

Mr. Pallister: Again, it would depend on a lot of factors. I've worked over the years with lots of folks who had low incomes but they had other assets, so for a person like that, \$4,000 might not be as important. If they had no other assets, I think it would probably be a fair bit. If they were just living on their income, like cheque to cheque, for sure that would be a fair piece because it would be about four months of their—would represent three and a half or four months of income.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes. Thank you for that answer as well. The reason I ask is, just reading in the paper today, it sounds like the agreement that the vast majority of Canadian leaders are on side with around the CPP would increase the CPP by roughly \$4,000 per person from about \$13,000 a year to about \$17,000 a year, and yet this government said no.

So I come back to my original question: For someone who is only making 13 grand a year, would another four not make a significant difference in their life?

Mr. Pallister: Well, it's interesting the member chooses \$4,000 because the average income family in Winnipeg would pay \$4,000 a year more in taxes than if they lived in Regina because of the overspending and high tax policies of the previous administration. So, frankly, if it wasn't for those policies, Manitobans would have, arguably, \$4,000 more now to deal with. They'd have it to invest or save for retirement, but they don't because of the high-tax and high-spend policies of the previous administration.

Mr. Altemeyer: I don't know if the Premier would be capable, but I'd be very interested to see his breakdown of that claim. Would he be willing to provide that?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I think the member has lots of resources within the NDP to find those numbers since it was that government that raised the taxes, first broadening the PST on things like home insurance, an essential item for most people to protect their assets, their principal asset. One of

their—often one of their major assets that they depend upon for retirement income would be home equity, so protecting it would be vital. And, of course, the government raised the PST after that, but it did broaden it, and before they broadened it, Manitoba homeowners didn't pay PST on the insurance on their homes, so they had the 7 per cent and then later it was 8 per cent more that they could choose to invest in, you know, retirement savings, or in any other way they saw fit, for that matter. So, I mean, that was an erosion of the ability of Manitoba families to save, certainly.

Then, of course, there was the tax the administration—and this was after they went to those same doors and promised they wouldn't raise the taxes. Remember that, Mr. Chair? But then they also put a new tax on the benefits for everybody who works in the province. So, for example, if you were a working person who had some benefits—fortunate enough to have a benefits program through your employer, in partnership with your employer, in most cases you would pay a premium for that, you know, to protect yourself in case you needed additional medical support or a medical supplementary plan or a disability—if you were disabled or lost your life and things like that.

*(15:10)

So these benefits packages are paid for, often a shared cost between employers and employees, like the CPP, which isn't government-funded, of course, but is funded solely by the contributions of working men and women and is not a government-funded issue. The previous administration added PST onto those benefits so that both employer and employee paid an additional 7 per cent and then it was 8, of course, the year later—8 per cent on that. So, this was also money that Manitobans didn't have.

So those are just two examples, and, of course, as the member knows, by raising the PST by one point in '13 the additional revenue taken from Manitoba families, working families, retirees as well, was in the area of about two hundred and seventy, two hundred and seventy-five million dollars a year, and that was in '13. So, gee, '14, '15, '16—that's over three years, just the PST alone, the 1 per cent, that's up over \$800 million, and then you've got a number of fee increases. So the member, I'm sure, could get the breakdown from people within his own organization and find that by saying a billion dollars, I'm actually understating the tax grab and the fee

grab that his administration did on Manitobans after promising not to.

Mr. Altemeyer: So I take that as a no, then. The question originally, just to bring this back over the runway, was could the Premier (Mr. Pallister) back up his claim that taxes have increased by \$4,000—and he's unable to do that, or unwilling to, which is an interesting response for someone who just said no to putting \$4,000 extra into everyone's pockets who would be accessing the CPP.

In fact, it goes even further than that, Mr. Deputy Chair. The Premier referenced resources that may be available to us in our capacity as the official opposition. Well, in fact, all Manitobans have fewer resources at their disposal to hold this government accountable and see what's going on because they got rid of the affordability section of the budget which actually lays out all of the different taxes and benefits that are available across the country in all the categories that we all pay and in the categories that we all receive. All that information has just magically disappeared.

So, for the Premier to suggest that the information is available, it's not available anymore, and it does fall on him to justify his decisions. But he's not willing to do that, so that's fine.

We'll come back to the CPP in another way. Government's responses, both from the Premier and from the Finance Minister today were—how to put this diplomatically, muddled?

Why did you say no in Vancouver?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member's emotional tirade and rant was loaded with factual inaccuracies, so I won't bother responding to any of them because there wouldn't be adequate time. I'll simply say that we did not say no, engaged in the dialogue that needs to be engaged in on this important issue, and we'll make sure to get it right and get it right for Manitobans, something that the previous administration did not do and it's something that we will do.

Mr. Altemeyer: So consultation, then, is where this government wants to go before it makes a decision about whether or not \$4,000 is a worthwhile investment for people only making \$13,000 a year. I think the vast majority of Manitobans can do some quick math and reach a pretty easy conclusion as to what the answer in Vancouver should have been, and, in fact, every other government in Canada reached that decision. Quebec is a separate case; they are also enhancing their pension plan, albeit it's not

part of the CPP. Manitoba's the lone pariah standing against progress—important social progress. The CPP is the single biggest reason that poverty rates among seniors declined dramatically after it was introduced in Canada.

So for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to suggest that \$4,000 may only be important in certain circumstances, well, for the tens of thousands of Manitobans who access the CPP, they're listening right now and they're not all that impressed. I'm wondering who did the Premier consult when he decided to raise his salary.

Mr. Pallister: Again, the member fails to do any adequate research to prepare him for the participation that he's now engaging in in this Estimates committee, bringing the level of debate down considerably. He has no understanding of the independent compensation process which we agreed to, and all parties agreed to abide by. It's clear in making an accusation that is totally false and without any support on the basis of fact.

The fact of the matter is, of course, that we abide by and support the independent establishment of pay and perks by an independent arbiter, not ourselves. And so the member's accusation on that front is totally false. Also, his assertion that someone making \$13,000 would see \$4,000 of this increase is a pipe dream and novel in its ingenuity, but not by any means supportable by the facts.

He doesn't seem to understand that the CPP is funded totally by employers and employees, and not by some government somewhere else that has a magic vault with money in it. And so what he is asserting is that somehow there's a bunch of found money for low-income peoples that they can find from somebody else when in fact, low income people contributing to CPP will benefit from their own contributions over a period of time, and, hopefully they'll have matching opportunities unless they're self-employed, in which case they themselves as employer and employee will contribute doubly to the plan. This is not an amount that's supportable by any tiny degree of research.

When the member talks about a \$4,000 bonus, he doesn't understand the basic CPP proposal that's before Canada right now, and I suggest that he hone his questions to base them more on factual assertion than on fancy.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, it is notoriously easy to get under this Premier's skin; it's fairly well documented,

looks like we're going to be treated to that again this afternoon.

The details of the CPP proposal as I understand it is, these are the details that I don't know of course, is that it would start in 2019, be phased in over seven years, and provide \$4,000 extra to people accessing the CPP at that time. And of course it would be funded by employers and by employees.

But this is the rub, this is the rub isn't it? This Premier doesn't really advocate for the employees; he's just here to defend the employers. The employers don't want to have to pay an extra premium, and he's lined up solidly with them, is that not right, sir?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the man's got a career in stand up, it'll be brief because it's not that funny. But he certainly doesn't have a career as a legislator if he doesn't do his homework on issues.

Now he throws out a number as if it applied to everyone in every income bracket, \$4,000. The actual proposal before us doesn't bear any resemblance to what he's just put on the record here. And so his ideological fervour isn't matched by one's willingness to do some homework, and that's too bad. I admire intelligence and my questioners, I've had great questions from the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) for example, who'd done his homework. And I've had great questions from the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) as well. But the member does a disservice to this committee and the members on it when he comes in here ill-prepared to make any argument based on fact.

I encourage him to, you know, maybe take a break, go read the thing, become familiar with the proposal and come back with some reasonably intelligent questions. In the meantime, he's just wasting the time of this committee and its members.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, to bring it back to, as the Premier just said, that there are different circumstances everywhere, he just previously made a blanket statement of our government having increased taxes by \$4,000. He was unable or unwilling to provide any documentation of how that would apply, and under our government of course, we did lay out the affordability advantage of Manitoba. We used several different income categories every single time and showed how families of different makeups, with different numbers of kids, with different amounts of income,

would fare in Manitoba compared to the other provinces.

He wants to accuse me of using blanket statements; he used it himself and was unable to justify it. So I come back to it. Mr. Premier, would you please explain to the Manitobans, thousands of them, who would benefit from you simply signing on to the rest of the country to improve the CPP, why you didn't do it?

* (15:20)

Mr. Pallister: Well, I'm curious as to why the member didn't advocate for CPP expansion for 17 years. He failed the people of Manitoba in that respect. We're part of the dialogue that he failed to be part of.

Also, in respect of the affordability act, the member hilariously claims that it's somehow an indication of the well-being of the people of the province, when, actually, what it does, it's a contrivance that only measures three things. It measures the amount that Manitobans pay for hydro, MPI and natural gas, three government essentially distributive bodies for government monopolies.

See, what he conveniently forgot to mention in this affordability measurement was income taxes. So, when you look at a household's expenditures you'll find that, in most cases, apart from a mortgage on their property, perhaps, the biggest expense they'll have is taxes. But, you know, the government—previous government thought it could measure affordability by leaving out the most important category of expenditure for Manitoba families. That's not an accurate measure of affordability. And, by ignoring the tax level, the tax burden, and by imposing higher taxes on Manitobans the previous government did more to erode the ability of Manitobans to afford to do things like save for a child's education or maybe do a home repair or, in fact, save for retirement than any other government in Canada did.

And so, when the member purports to care about the affordability of Manitoba's—Manitobans, he may care about it in theory, but in actual fact, when given an opportunity to stand up and support that affordability and move it forward, he failed, and so did his colleagues.

Mr. Altemeyer: So, if the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) so concerned about affordability, why not sign on to the CPP?

Mr. Pallister: Again, we're going to avail ourselves of an opportunity to discuss this. The member claims to have discussed with tens of thousands of Manitobans how they feel about this decision we've made to actually give this some thought. He claims that he's talked to tens of thousands of Manitobans. I'd be interested in him providing the committee with any evidence that he's talked to any more than 23 people and made them agree with him when he was having the conversation.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, it's interesting the Premier thinks I've talked to that many people. I suppose I'm no more popular than any other MLA. We get our phone calls. We get our emails. It hasn't been 10,000. I never said I'd talked to 10,000. I said there's thousands of people who will benefit from getting the CPP.

They want to know, and I am asking on their behalf, whether I've talked to them or not, why you're denying them an increase in CPP that every single person receiving CPP in every other of the eight provinces is going to be getting. Where are you on this?

Mr. Pallister: Again, the member reveals his confusion in his preamble. He doesn't seem to understand that in having a dialogue about an important issue such as this it is quite possible to give consideration to facts as opposed to fancy or old ideology. He advances a position that we have not taken; chooses to misrepresent his consultation; now admits that he didn't consult with tens of thousands of people, as he purported to say earlier; and actually has left out Manitobans in the previous opportunity he had to govern and make decisions, entirely, going so far as to have phony budget consultations which were not in—didn't result, of course, in a budget. And, you know, in the two years prior, having what were so-called budget consultations, where no one came forward, not one Manitoban came forward and told the Finance minister they wanted the PST raised, and then went ahead and raised it anyway.

So the member need not give this committee lectures about consultation. We—you know, on the one hand, he says why didn't you make an instant decision and jump on board, and on the other hand he says you should consult; I've consulted.

Well, you know, we believe that Manitobans deserve to have retirement plans that work for them. We know that Manitobans have suffered from record increases in tax under the previous administration that have eroded their ability to save for retirement

and to secure a financial future. And we're looking for ways to remedy that, starting with a budget that for the first time in many years does not hike taxes. This is a significant step in the right direction, something that will leave more money in the hands of Manitobans, in addition to things—initiatives long overdue, like indexing the tax brackets to and—the rate of inflation as opposed to nefariously sneaking more money out of Manitobans' pocketbooks and off their kitchen tables so that the government can spend it.

We're going to index the brackets to inflation. We're going to index the basic personal exemption as well so that more people are taken off the tax rolls who are in low-income circumstances.

But, of course, our goal is to make sure that all Manitobans at every income level are able to construct, with the support of one aspect, not exclusively, that being CPP, but others as well: personal savings, home equity, other avenues as well, that they'll be able to acquire the financial security they want to have in retirement. That's an important goal, and it's one we want to see accomplished, and we'll work with Manitobans to help them achieve those goals, but most certainly it should not be misrepresented by the member or anyone else that we are against retirement security, when, in fact, we are certainly for it and will do everything we can to make sure that Manitobans achieve the financial security they deserve to get in their lives.

Mr. Altemeyer: So, if the CPP isn't on the table with this government, what other model is he looking at?

Mr. Pallister: Again, the preamble's false, so I can't respond. There's no question there I can answer.

Mr. Altemeyer: We'll try this again. Let's say that whatever consultation this government feels it needs to do, despite the fact that debate about the CPP has been all over the media for years, that, in fact, our previous government played a major role in bringing the conversation as far along as it now is. Vancouver yesterday was the finish line, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) yanked his Finance Minister back and said, no, no, no, we don't want to be doing that just yet. We don't want to actually accomplish something. We're going to do something else for some reason at some time that has not been identified yet.

So, if the Premier has a problem with the CPP, what's he going to do instead for low-income people on the CPP who would be getting \$4,000, according

to the reports being made publicly, according to the federal Finance Minister; it's about a one third increase in the CPP amount; I'm not making these numbers up. What's he going to do instead?

Mr. Pallister: Though I do not discount the very real possibility that one of the revolving door Finance ministers the previous administration had installed for weeks at a time may have at some point during a Finance ministers' meeting waxed eloquent on the possibility that Manitoba and Canadian workers should pay more premiums so that the benefits could be made greater over time, and I do not dismiss that there is a possibility that might have happened; the member could get verification from one of the previous what, I don't know how many Finance ministers the previous administration had; there were a number; maybe he could get verification of that. If he'd like to produce a press release that the previous administration did espousing their fervent belief that the CPP benefit should be raised, he could produce it, table it, we could discuss it. But, otherwise, it's just his say-so, and based on his previous preambles, which have been erroneous in so many ways, I'd ask him to produce some evidence that his—the previous administration ever sincerely espoused in a genuine or effective way any kind of expansion of the CPP program. If they did, I welcome the evidence and would look forward to having a discussion on the basis of that proof. Otherwise, I just simply don't believe him.

I do, though, believe that during the election campaign, that particular administration would've said just about anything to try to get support and, in fact, did.

Mr. Altemeyer: So the Premier made Manitoba the only ones outside of a new deal, many years in the works, on the CPP. He's not going to approve that until he talks to people. He hasn't indicated who he's going to talk to, and he has no alternative pension scheme up his sleeve to offer.

Manitobans should be reassured by this—why, exactly?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Manitobans are assured. Business optimism has quadrupled since this new government came in, so Manitobans are assured, certainly, in that respect, in the SME sector. Manitobans generally are very optimistic now about the future; they were not before, and they had good reason not to be.

* (15:30)

The member raises the point—he keeps raising the point—that we are the only one. As I recall, Tommy Douglas was the only one. As I recall, in many other respects of leadership around the world in global history, there was only one, and standing up for Manitobans is what we're going to do, and if we're the only one, so be it. The reality of the situation that we face is as Canada's newest government, that we came into the middle of a discussion where the previous administration had not played at any significant role, had not demonstrated any singular leadership in any respect, and where we are now being listened to as a voice at the table and we will use that opportunity to advance Manitoba-beneficial aspects in this debates process.

I would encourage the member to understand that simply saying, you're alone, doesn't make a person wrong.

Mr. Altemeyer: Premier is certainly the only one. When the Premier becomes the only one standing up for a revolutionary new social service, as Tommy Douglas did, which is now—you know, he's recognized as our greatest Canadian by some exercises: health care, our universal health-care system, one of the things Canadians are consistently the most proud of. When the Premier is standing up advocating for something like that, that would be standing alone on a good purpose. When he's standing up like J.S. Woodsworth did, former MP for Wolseley, and fighting, sometimes even from prison, for a pension plan for workers, well, then, yes, that would be standing up on your own. Standing up on your own and blocking the improvement of an existing pension program, not quite in the same league. Who's the Premier going to consult with now that he's refused to pass the CPP improvement?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, the pure ignorance and ill-informed nature of the member's preamble has to be commented upon. The member makes the claim that somehow our concerns—and we are addressing Manitobans' priorities in addressing our concerns in the appropriate way, in a dignified way. He is asserting that somehow we're blocking something which can be approved by seven provinces representing no less than two thirds of the population of the country, and so he doesn't understand the basic process of how these plans are approved. That's, of course, clear in his preamble.

That being said, you know, I have tremendous respect for Tommy Douglas and J.S. Woodsworth and know, as the member should, that they and

people like Stanley Knowles who handed me my university degrees at our convocation in Brandon—my school was Tommy Douglas's school, J.S. Woodsworth's school. I have tremendous respect for those gentlemen, but they were willing to stand up for their people in a way they felt appropriate, and that is precisely what the new PC government of Manitoba is doing now on behalf of Manitobans. We're using the opportunity to advantage Manitobans as best we can not exclusively on this file, but on many others. Just—may benefit the member—and I—sincerely, I offer him this just as a way to understand a little bit better what exactly we're discussing here.

The program as proposed changes the CPP to increase the contributions so that they are able to fund additional benefits in a variety of categories. The changes in contribution would begin in 2019. They would be phased in over the following five years. The actual inclusion of larger—of a higher maximum would begin later, in about eight years' time. There would be larger benefits—and this is the major change in the proposal, by the way—would increase the payments over the period of 24 and 25 by up to \$82,000.

So the major change in the plan is to enhance the ability of people at middle and higher income brackets to actually be eligible for the CPP. In reference to the member's comments about minimum income workers, a change in the percentage from 25 to 33 and a third per cent of the yearly maximum pensionable earnings would mean approximately an 8 per cent increase in benefit would occur to them. But the maximum benefit would go from 25 to 33 and a third. So, in the example the member gave, and I'm just doing this math in my head so it could have a plus-minus, a \$13,000-income person, assuming yearly pensionable earnings were that amount—well, it would not be; it would be less than that because there's a basic amount that is not included. But let's for argument's sake say the basic amount—and then they're making 13 over that, fair enough. So they're making \$13,000. Currently, that would be a \$3,500 eligibility for pension, and it'll go up by 8 per cent, so a little bit more.

So it's a confusing thing here because the yearly maximum 'pensable' earnings right now is \$13,400, so I—we're using an example that might confuse things. But, suffice to say, it's an 8 per cent increase in that benefit. So the—that, if a person's making \$13,000, their rate—the maximum rate they could get

in pension is a quarter of that. So they would get a CPP of a quarter of \$13,000—\$3,250.

That's under the present system. Under the new system, the amount would go up from a quarter of that \$13,000 to a third. So now you're talking about \$4,333. So, the difference isn't the \$4,000 the member talked about; it's a lot less than that. Nonetheless, I'm not submitting that it isn't an important change in that respect.

The workers' benefits, though, have to come from somewhere. And where they come from is higher premiums paid by those same workers. So what—part of what the federal proposal does is it creates—like, there's a tax credit for your premium on paying into CPP right now, but there's no tax deductibility. They're going to introduce tax deductibility; that's the proposal.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable First Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Altemeyer: That was an entertaining tour of the bowels of the CPP program in a theoretical situation.

I love how the Premier (Mr. Pallister), previously, was saying that I didn't understand what was on the table and then had to consult with the staff so that he could get that back over the runway. But let's just take all of that and put it aside and come back to the basic question. If the Premier has a detailed understanding of the enormous benefits that this proposal would have for people on CPP, what's not to like? Why not pass it?

Mr. Pallister: Well, there's no sense trying to put—pour any more tea into a—guyabano tea into a cup that's already full, Madam—Mr. Chair, so I won't bother trying to educate the member further.

I thought that he might be interested in the facts and I thought it might help inform him in his questions but, apparently, it's not really a lot of point in that because he knows enough now to make the kinds of arguments he's making. He doesn't need any help from me or anyone else.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, we'll add it to the list of things that haven't been answered.

I'll go back to another one he didn't answer. Maybe he didn't hear the question. Who's the Premier going to be talking to, who is his government going to be talking to, as they debate whether or not improving the CPP is a good thing?

Mr. Pallister: We'll always act in the best interests of Manitobans as a government, something that Manitobans haven't seen for a long time. And on April 19th they rejected the premise the member is starting from that his administration ever did that.

I've emphasized already the importance of genuine listening, and the member appears unwilling to do that.

Mr. Altemeyer: It's an odd answer for someone who wants to be, so claim, transparent and accountable. It doesn't sound like he's very interested in having open, honest dialogue with people at all.

I'll give him a more specific angle to the importance of proper consultation, and it's something he's going to run into time and time again in government. Oddly enough, the people that you are now in charge of, the government you're now in charge of, lots of people want to share their views, and they expect to have opportunities to do it.

What specific measures is the Premier going to put in place to ensure that low-income people have a chance to share their views with his government on whether or not improvements to the CPP is a good idea?

*(15:40)

Mr. Pallister: I don't need any instruction from the member in consulting with low-income people or with the marginalized in our society. I spent my entire political career doing that. So I'll continue to do that in the future, as I have in the past.

Mr. Altemeyer: I don't suppose there'd be a timeline involved of when the Premier is going to hold these—shall we call them discussions if maybe consultation is too strong a word? When will the consultations or discussions be done so that the Premier can then realize that, yes, indeed, improving the CPP is a good thing to do?

Mr. Pallister: We'll continue to consult on a regular basis with Manitobans. Our caucus members, our new caucus members, in particular, have been, I think, tremendous additions to the Legislative Assembly and have already demonstrated their willingness and ability to actually reach out to Manitobans, hear what they have to say, gather facts not fantasy, as the member appears willing to put on the record, and actually engage in a constructive process, as have a number of the new members of the opposition demonstrated a willingness and ability to do that, unlike some who returned here.

Mr. Altemeyer: If I were to fill out a FIPPA form and send it to the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office asking who he's already met with about pensions, whose names would be on it?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I encourage the member to investigate and do research. It's something he hasn't demonstrated any ability to do today, but perhaps he could start and he may like to file that form he was talking about. I'd welcome him doing that.

Mr. Altemeyer: I'll consider it.

Would have been much easier, it'd save him staff time, becomes a more efficient government just to share the information right now in the public realm. I'll ask again: Has the Premier consulted with anyone already on pensions?

Mr. Pallister: I think Manitobans are still anxiously awaiting any evidence the previous administration—which the member was a part—would actually disclose any information in respect of shopping for goods or services, would actually share information on severance payments offered to former disgruntled members, would actually do anything but cover up and hide the information from Manitobans, going so far as to actually violate The Financial Administration Act of our province in not disclosing untendered contracts, covering those up.

These are the kinds of things that we've inherited. But we haven't inherited those habits from the member opposite, and nor will we. We're going to be moving to make the government of Manitoba more accountable and transparent in its operations as we move forward. We continue to focus on ways to do that and we will succeed.

Mr. Altemeyer: So, just to recap, so far in Estimates today we've established that Manitoba is the only province that has refused to support an improvement to the CPP. The Premier has refused to indicate if he's met with anyone already about pensions who may have influenced his government's decision, odd though it was. He's also refused to indicate what consultations or discussions are going to take place to help inform his government of what their position on CPP should be, and he's refused to give a timeline on when those discussions might be done.

Mr. Premier, have I captured our moment together so far accurately?

Mr. Pallister: No, the member hasn't captured any essence of reality in his preambles up to this point, but I encourage him to continue to do his best to try.

Mr. Altemeyer: Maybe a specific question will work better. Did the Premier or his Finance Minister meet with, let's say, the CFIB on pensions prior to Vancouver's meeting yesterday?

Mr. Pallister: On the issue of consultation, perhaps the member would consider that in budget year 2001 when the administration of the day expanded the PST to include the non-farm use of fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, rodenticides and weed control chemicals for—to the tune of \$2 million of extra revenue. Perhaps the member would like to outline for members of the committee who he consulted with or who his administration consulted with in that decision.

Mr. Altemeyer: That's interesting, the Premier is now having to go back all the way to 2001 was it, for a decision made about insecticides and fungicides in order to dance around a question—pretty straightforward—about who he's talking to and who he's not going to talk to about CPP.

Let's just try that one again. Did you meet with the CFIB, you or your Finance Minister, on pensions? Did they give you advice on what they thought you should do and did you follow that advice?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the quality of response is, I hope, in no way affected adversely by the lack of quality of the questions. But I will continue to emphasize to the member that, in terms of deliberation on important policy issues, we intend to consult with Manitobans, have and will continue to. But I did not see that demonstrated in the previous administration.

And so, again, for the member I'd have to ask him, when his administration broadened the PST to include the labour component of all contracts for mechanical, electrical contracting—that was in 2002, by the way—and took \$10.6 million away from Manitobans in the process, who exactly did they consult with in that decision?

Mr. Altemeyer: That's good; we're a whole year closer to the present. From 2001, 2002, that's progress.

Looks like the Premier, for some reason, doesn't want to talk about who it is that he's talking about, and who he's talking to about pensions. I wonder if there's any other organizations out there that he may have consulted with on this that he doesn't want people to know about—Chamber of Commerce maybe?

Mr. Pallister: I'd remind the member that, in 2004, when his government broadened the legal services to include them—to make them PST-able, accounting services, architectural services, engineering services, security services, and tap Manitobans to the tune of \$23.9 million, that was—I believe—not done with any consultation. But I could invite the member to put on the record an outline for the members of the committee what consultation was actually done on respect of that tax gouge?

Mr. Altemeyer: As the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has, no doubt, significant awareness, wasn't intimately involved in those decisions, but what he has to realize is it's now his name and his government's name that is at the bottom of the page when it comes to today's decisions.

And, at the bottom of the page which talks about how the entire country except Manitoba is improving pensions for Canadians—clear across the country—his name is not on the bottom of that page. He is the only one missing.

Could he please give this committee, give this province, give these citizens any indication of when he's going to make a decision on the CPP, and what, if any, role citizens are going to get to play in informing the Premier of what his decision should be.

Mr. Pallister: Again, the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer)-'pompost'-Wolseley I'm sorry, actually put another falsehood on the record in respect of our position, as he has done previously. And I would remind him, again, that not only are we actively engaged in standing up for Manitoba's best interests in this important debate, but we will continue to be.

And I would remind him, as well, that there have been—nor are there planned for some years, any significant changes to the CPP. I would encourage him to understand that, for the simple lack—I expect he's motivated by the lack of progress in the previous 17 years under his party in this province, and I understand that he's anxious for political credit for whatever happens here.

*(15:50)

But I would remind him that the CPP changes that we have all been discussing, much I'm sure that he is unaware of, do not occur until 2019.

Mr. Chairperson: Before I accept the member from Wolseley, I would like to take a moment to caution

all honourable members on their language in committee today. While I recognize that at times discussions in committee can be heated, I would ask that members keep their remarks temperate and worthy of this Assembly and the office that we all hold.

Mr. Altemeyer: Couldn't agree more, Mr. Deputy Chair, and I'll just point out that while the Premier just referenced discussions that are happening around pensions, he's apparently not prepared to tell anyone what discussions he's having and, in fact, he's deliberately blocking—so far—Manitobans from having any discussions with him or with his government on this crucial policy issue where his government has yet again dropped the ball. Let's—it's becoming difficult to keep track of the number of times that has happened in their short lifespan, but we can definitely add this one to the list.

If my honourable colleague from Minto is so prepared, it's quite clear my questions are not going to receive answers today. I think that's a disservice to the function of Estimates and it is a disservice to the citizens of Manitoba, but I have done my best.

So I turn it over to my honourable colleague.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): And I guess, now for something completely different, as they say.

I just want to ask the Premier a few questions that arise out of the Justice Estimates that were completed, and I've had a chance to read through the mandate letter that the Premier gave to the Attorney General. There's 17 bullet points, none of which deal with crime prevention or public safety, but there is one item that I'll read out, and I'd really just like to give the Premier an opportunity to explain his vision. It didn't come through very clearly in the Justice Estimates, but I'm sure he can help us.

The direction to the Justice Minister is to work to reduce the recidivism rate through an innovative social impact bond program, and I'd like the Premier to explain what his vision is for this and how he thinks it can be helpful.

Mr. Pallister: Sure, I thank the member for the first reasoned question of the session today.

We understand that there's been some major progress made in terms of reducing recidivism in some other jurisdictions, not exclusively in England. There was a social impact project that was instituted there that involved youth offenders. I'd be more than welcome to—I don't have any information with me

today, but I know the member is interested in these issues and I'd undertake to get him some more information on that.

The issue of recidivism, and the member as Justice Minister knows this far better than I, in Manitoba among youth offenders, not exclusively male offenders, though, the numbers for young males are shocking. They're—they are a real cause of concern. So this project seemed to make some—cause some real headway, and so the part of the mandate was to research further and see if there were applicabilities on that type of a model that we could learn from for Manitoba. And, if it can assist us in reducing recidivism, I know the member would agree that would be a worthwhile outcome.

Mr. Swan: I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for that, now I thank him, as well, for his undertaking to provide details on the program.

Was it just one program or one example from England that this is based on, or are there other examples that the Premier is relying on?

Mr. Pallister: Honestly, I can't recall other examples though I think there are. That was the—that was one of the earliest ones. I think it was about five years ago, and I—my understanding of this—I—you know what I could undertake also is to direct the member to some of the research that's been—I think the Rockefeller Foundation in the United States has done a lot of specific research. I know here in Canada there haven't been many of these social partnerships, if you want to call them that, that have been driven forward under this model.

At this point in time, though, I am told there are three other provinces that are—either have established or are looking to establish these. I would explain further, for the member's benefit and members of the committee, these are not designed to be anything except innovative and experimental programs to try to find different ways of addressing social problems.

The general, I think, purpose of them is that, to—the Saskatchewan one, I have a little bit of familiarity with theirs—is working on helping teenage mothers and is focused on trying to find mechanisms for assisting them that may then be, as a consequence of the experiment, applicable to the system and could be used elsewhere throughout—whether it's a civil service model or some other model—could be used to assist in addressing those social concerns.

As far as other talks, and I don't claim to have tremendous expertise on this, I have—I'm reading with interest, always, and so I have offered to the member to forward whatever research I've got at my disposal to him, because I know he'll be very interested in reading about this. I think this is one of those examples where we can all take a look at this and, setting aside partisanship, hopefully we can come up with some more innovative approaches than perhaps we've—than others have—that others have learned from, that we can learn from here in Manitoba. We do lead in some categories of social problems, certainly, as the member knows. And so, it would be important for us to look for ways to lead in finding solutions as well.

Mr. Swan: I thank the Premier for that additional undertaking, and I do promise that I will read what information is passed along.

The Premier talks about it being a social partnership. What kind of organizations does the Premier see the province partnering with to bring in a social impact bond program?

Mr. Pallister: Again, I'll say to the member as a qualifier that I'm going to describe this as best I can in general terms, but my understanding is it's a partnership of expertise and a desire to see innovative solutions found with capital provided from the private sector and design leadership provided by the public sector with outcomes determined in consultation with the various partners so that it can be measured as to whether these programs are actually achieving results. I think the time frames vary, depending on the nature of the programs. For some, results may be measurable and achievable in a shorter time and for others it may take longer. But I think, generally, that's the concept.

I know that there is—in Manitoba, there's a tremendous history, as the member knows, as all members know, of supporting worthwhile projects. We have—we lead the country in respect of charitable giving and volunteering, and I know there's no doubt that Manitobans are altruistic people who want to see social advance, and I won't start reciting examples. All members know of them in their ridings and they know of them around the province, where people have stepped up to the plate and helped on while causes.

This is just, I think, conceptually, in its simplest form, one way of tapping into that desire to help and targeting it toward specific, innovative approaches

that have hitherto not been utilized in certain areas of social policy.

Mr. Swan: Yes, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about capital from private sector but also talks about how charitable Manitobans are, and I have no issue with that; I think we all agree.

Is it the Premier's vision that this is going to be a corporate model, where there will be investors seeking to get results and get a return on their investment, or is this, in the Premier's vision, a charitable model where Manitobans who are able to provide money are doing this out of the goodness of their hearts?

Mr. Pallister: Well, that's the fundamental question and I think there's a balance there. One of the early—some of the early plans were—profit motive was apparent; I don't particularly think that's the model we need to subscribe to. What it seems to have evolved to conceptually in most jurisdictions now is a more altruistic but corporate model. In other words, there are foundations, for example, that are investing in a number of these types of projects. The benefit to them is limited.

* (16:00)

Most of the more recent ones that have been put into play in—I know of one in Australia recently and in the United States of a few—cap the potential return at a relatively modest level, say 4 or 5 per cent, so that the person putting the money into this is not—it's not a get-rich-quick scheme, just to put it that way. But the benefit of that design is that you can attract capital, which can then go back to the investor, which can then go back into other innovative practices. And this is what some regions are finding is that the capital is getting reinvested into other additional innovative projects.

The balance, of course, we don't at least—I shouldn't say of course—but I think what they learned in England with their early project was that the profit motive was not the principal motive of most investors.

In speaking with Saskatchewan, senior people in Saskatchewan, about their project, they've adopted a similar approach with a fairly modest return to the investor, and they—their—one of their major investors is their credit unions that wanted to support their project there, the one I referenced earlier, with the teen moms.

Mr. Swan: I thank the Premier for that.

When I asked the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) about timelines, she told me that this was something that would be pursued during the first mandate and did not commit to anything happening on this in this fiscal year.

Is that the Premier's understanding?

Mr. Pallister: I wouldn't want to disagree with the minister. I do think that there's an opportunity here for us to get this right, and that may take a bit of time. I think it's important, too, to establish the parameters.

My understanding of these programs, where they work best, the government works with the altruistic, motivated donors to try to determine not just the scope of the project but measurable results as a consequence of it, whether it's, say, getting young male offenders to not reoffend or it's helping people find work skills to get out of the cycle of welfare dependency or you name it. It's important that those are rigorously measured, those results are rigorously measured, obviously, because we are talking about trying to find practices that will lead to better results for the citizens of our province going forward. So, accurate measurements matter. So that's the—I guess that's the caveat in terms of the design work.

I think we can learn from other jurisdictions, though. And I have had indications from at least two other provincial premiers that they would make available to us all their design work in terms of how they moved ahead with some of these projects in their jurisdictions so that we don't have to sort of start from scratch here in Manitoba. Then we can tailor-make our projects as we choose to, to address the issues of greatest concern.

Mr. Swan: I thank the Premier for the response. And although it wasn't specifically answered, I'm not going to hold up the Premier on that. I'm again presuming that there is no expectation that the Minister of Justice is going to be able to institute this program in the current fiscal year.

Does the Premier see in this—and I know there's some other areas; some other mandate letters contain reference to social impact bonds—do we find the altruistic donors through a request-for-proposal system? Or how does the Premier see these kinds of programs being rolled out?

Mr. Pallister: I just was handed a little bit more detailed background that explains better an answer to one of the member's previous inquiries, better than I did, so I'll read from it for a moment, and just say the

social impact bond model is a new approach to financing social innovation that—and we're in the research phase, I guess, is the honest answer to the member's previous question about timing. We're in the research phase right now. There are approximately 50 examples globally that we're aware of right now, largely in the United States and United Kingdom, most are still in the early stages and evaluations regarding their effectiveness are preliminary.

Under the most common model a government contracts with a private sector intermediary to obtain social services. The government pays the intermediary entirely, or almost entirely based upon outcomes, the achievement of performance targets. Performance is rigorously measured by comparing the outcomes of individuals referred to the service provider relative to the outcomes of a control group. So, if the intermediary fails to achieve the minimum performance target, the government does not pay. In other words, pay for performance is, I guess, a fair way of describing some aspects of this type of program. Payments typically rise for performances that exceed the minimum target up to an agreed-upon maximum payment level.

I can share with the member, and I appreciate his line of questioning because I know it's—I believe motivated by a sincere desire to learn and to assist in getting better results. And I would say I've had a number of discussions just as a consequence of—as does the member, I guess. We get into different social situations and I have been—I've had over the last two or three years meetings with people in various places around the province. I can say that I think there is an appetite here among many Manitobans to see us move forward, to see us innovate on social—you know, finding solutions to social challenges—and I do think there's an appetite for people to put their money where their heart is, so to speak. Whether this is at the individual level or at the corporate level, there are a number of social enterprise projects of different types around the province right now and I think that's tremendous. And this is to me sort of a cousin of that that can allow for people who wish to, to invest in finding better solutions than we've been able to find up 'til now.

This is by, in no way, shape or form a criticism of those working in social services or the justice system today, but they would be—many of them would be the first to tell you they're up to their armpits in management of major and demanding

crises on a day-to-day basis. And so, it isn't always the opportune circumstance when you're in that circumstance to be looking at an innovative different way to practise what you're doing on a day-to-day basis.

So, if the intermediary fails to achieve minimum performance targets, the government does not pay. In other words, this is a risk to the investors. Payments under the model are as I've described. Again, what seems to be happening in other jurisdictions is that the people who are getting into it, once you get to a, you know, a modest level of return as opposed to—the profit motive which was the mistake, I think, that those in the early days might have acknowledged they made, once you get to the, sort of—how would I describe it, altruistic motivation—people tend to want to invest again and again in other projects or expand further one that has found some success.

And so what has happened is that there has been some progress made—never perfect. I know from some I don't see them in my—in the briefing note I've been handed, but I know of some that most certainly were not successful and we should not expect that there would be a magic solution that would always work. But there are some that have been as well.

Mr. Swan: I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for this discussion.

Wonder if the innovative successes in the past couple of years was starting a program called Block by Block and, of course, Ms. Miller, sitting next to the Premier, is well aware of how that got going and the successes. One of the benefits of Block by Block is to bring together different players. It may be—the police may be involved, but instead of being the thin edge of the wedge they're really part of a circle. And the intention of Block by Block is to bring together not just Justice but Family Services, Education, Health, as well as the various agencies in a 21-block area in north Winnipeg. The goal is to get better outcomes all around, to try to reduce the number of police attendances at some homes which the Premier may be surprised to know it can be as often as 10 or 15 times in the course of a month to try to prevent more children from being taken into care and in some cases, help families with plans to get children out of care.

* (16:10)

I did ask the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) if there were any plans to expand that successful model, whether larger than the 21-block area that

exists or into other communities elsewhere in Winnipeg or in Manitoba. She told me that there was no intention to do that in the fiscal year. I'm wondering if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) can give us any confidence that this—the kind of model that, even if it's not happening in this year, that the Premier is interested in developing in the course of the next few years.

Mr. Pallister: On its surface, yes, I mean it sounds tremendous. I think we're all looking for ways to make progress on so many of these files that I think it would be exciting to learn more about what the member's just shared with us.

I'm going to go back if I could, not to digress, but just to elaborate on an earlier question on—I had referenced England, and I just was handed a bit of background on this first—the first plan that—in March 2010, so, about six years ago, the UK minister of—a Ministry of Justice entered into an agreement with Social Finance UK to lower the rate of recidivism among a group of 3,000 short-sentence prisoners over a six year period.

Social Finance UK, which is essentially the agency empowered with setting up the social impact or social innovation concept, raised £5 million from various investors. In order for the government to pay, the reoffending rate had to fall by at least 7.5 per cent as compared with a similar control group of prisoners being dealt with essentially under the status quo approach.

Sixty per cent of—in their experience, which is much lower than ours, 60 per cent of short-sentence prisoners are convicted of at least one offense within a year of their release. The member could share with us—he would have a better handle on the more recent stats, I think, on re-offense. It costs—in Britain, it costs approximately £65,000 to imprison someone, an additional £40,000 per year of incarceration. So recidivism, just in terms—not in terms of the human cost—just in terms of the actual costs, as the member well knows, it is incredibly costly to government coffers, let alone to the people who are the victims of the crimes and the people who commit the crimes themselves, quite frankly.

By 2015, five years later, the recidivism rate of the 3,000 subjects in the pilot had fallen by 8.4 per cent, surpassing the contractual objective. This is just one example, and I hope that would help to elaborate a little bit on how that one worked. I was—and maybe just for the member's interest, and I

appreciate he shared some research with me the other day that I will make use of, and I wanted to share something with him as well.

The Kennedy school of government in Harvard University—and this he could research himself, I won't undertake to give him more because he can get it—established the Social Impact Bond Technical Assistance Lab to research how governments can foster social innovation and prove the results they obtain with their social spending. And I'll share—how much time do I have? Couple of minutes? *[interjection]* I'll just share with the member—because their findings are very interesting on this issue. Their early research findings indicate that the most important criteria for a social impact bond approach is its potential for a large impact. Interesting, eh, because other—because people are interested in solving a big problem; not so interested in a little one. If you want to use these types of projects, use them to address a major concern.

It goes on to say there are other criteria including, but not limited to, that initiatives need to be aligned with governments' top priorities, that interventions with sample sizes larger enough to determine if an outcome wasn't due to chance—that's very important in the measurements, right—so, what you're talking about is at least 200 participants in these projects so that you can get—you know, I don't need to elaborate, the member understands what I'm saying.

SIB contract in some jurisdictions, they recommend higher values, \$10 million, \$20 million. I'm hopeful, having from my reading and research, that we could do a smaller one as an experimental exercise earlier, just to make sure that we're working out the kinks properly; though, generally speaking, their advice is to go with something around the \$20-million range. This is because there might be administrative costs as a component, overhead costs, which have to be absorbed, and, as the member would understand, just a critical mass on a smaller project sometimes, as non-profits will tell you, can eat up too much in the way of administrative and soft costs, not benefit the recipients, desired recipients, of the program.

Interventions don't always pay for themselves in terms of cash savings from reduced costs but they provide both cash savings and non-monetizable social benefits such as reduced crime; higher earnings through—example, training initiatives; better health outcomes—that would apply in the

Saskatchewan model, working with teen pregnancy—improvements in housing; educational advantages as well.

So, the—getting it right in terms of measurements is really important, I guess, is what I'm saying.

Mr. Swan: I had the chance to ask the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) the other day about the possibility of expanding the mental health court, which was started in Manitoba a couple of years ago and seems to be successful at helping individuals who commit crimes because of their mental health issues.

It's a humane approach. It really makes the judge the quarterback, if you will, to pass off the person to various agencies, government departments—Housing, Family Services, Health, as may be—to try and get the person help.

I've been disappointed that the Minister of Justice has not committed to either making the program deeper, in terms of supporting more people in Winnipeg, or wider, in terms of serving other communities.

I know that in Brandon there's a lot of interest in having a mental health court operate there. I know there's a committee that's been struck. I know the judges and lawyers in that community are quite engaged. And the mental health community is certainly very excited.

The Minister of Justice told me there's no money in the Estimates to do anything in Brandon this year.

I wonder if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) would, even if there's no commitment for this year, if the Premier will commit to making sure that we do expand this very, very successful program to other communities.

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate the member's advocacy for the program and have some sympathy to what he raises.

And I guess I have to go back to the reality of our fiscal situation. The real situation we face is one where it is difficult, because there are programs like the member raises, that, on the face of them, we would love to say yes to. There are a great many of those, in fact, a great many demands on the Treasury that we would love to satisfy. At the same time, the balance between what we can do today and what will, in fact, be sustainable over time has to be achieved. And that's the fiscal reality that the member understands.

And so I would say to him we're endeavouring, in our first year of our—well, our first few weeks, in fact, to begin to curve the course, if you will, so that we can find the savings in other lower priority areas of government so that we are able to afford to invest in the kinds of things he raises in a sustainable way on an ongoing basis without jeopardizing our ability to do so on other needs as they appear or as they develop in future years. And that's the challenge that we face.

And, without rancour or accusation, I simply say that we did inherit a situation financially that is not sustainable over the longer period; that has, well, as evidence, I guess, just last year, the member knows, our credit rating was downgraded. It gives me little comfort that it's at a level that it was 25 years ago. It's lower than it was last year. And because of that, just in terms of the additional costs for that event, that has taken money away from projects such as what—the one the member raises.

And that's the trouble with unsustainable money management practices. They result in an erosion of our ability to do the things we'd like to do because we're creating happier moneylenders as opposed to addressing the priorities such as the one that the member raises.

That being said, as we move forward—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

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

The committee recessed at 4:20 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:35 p.m.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): I would like to call the Committee of Supply back to order. This Committee will resume with its business where we left off prior to recess.

I believe the honourable First Minister was in the middle of providing a response to a question.

Mr. Pallister: I believe that I was too, and I am now going to elaborate on something that I think is important to understand. This—I really appreciated

the member's interest in this topic and others that we've had the chance to share about in the past. And I would say that I think there's a real opportunity for productive work to be undertaken here together, and I would emphasize this is not, does not have to be an element of—doesn't have to have an element of partisan difference in it.

I'd emphasize that, for example, other jurisdictions like Nova Scotia—this is from their Speech from the Throne of three years ago. It says, Nova Scotia will become the first Canadian jurisdiction to offer social impact bonds encouraging investors to support innovative, socially responsible projects by charitable and non-governmental organizations. And that, of course, at that time, was an NDP administration.

So, there's—I've read some criticisms emanating from a couple of sources regionally that see this as some kind of an ideological battle; I don't see it that way. I think if we can work together to achieve better outcomes and better results, we should be looking at innovative ways to do that and all Manitobans will benefit.

The members—I remember now; the member's question was specific to the mental health court, and, again, I give him what I hope he will not take as an excuse because I think that's not a fair description. But it is important to address the fiscal realities we face, and we're endeavouring in our early weeks to do that and will continue to, on an ongoing basis. It's my hope that by finding savings in these lower priority areas that things like he's raised today can be affordable and sustainable in the longer term. Such is not the case at this point. And, again, it's—that's why it's incumbent on us, as a new government, to address in every way we possibly can how we can find those savings within.

I do think that Manitobans are essentially taxed to the max, and I don't think just going back to them and saying, pay higher taxes—whether in the form of additional tax burden on their household now or in the form of a deficit which is nothing more than a deferred tax that someone else has to pay later—would be fair or right. So, the difficult challenge that all governments face, I suppose, is to know how to separate a current need in the context of a future need that may be greater, and to be able to manage sustainably to support the greater needs that we will have to face in the future is a very critical aspect of our challenge, I think.

Mr. Swan: I'd certainly encourage the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to turn the lens around. Just a few questions ago, he put on the record the cost of incarcerating somebody for one year in Britain, about £65,000 per year. We get a little discount even considering where the pound is going; the cost is probably close to \$100,000 a year. I don't see that there should be a fiscal concern with moving ahead with expanding problem-solving courts, like a mental health court in Brandon, like expanding drug courts.

I was pleased, actually, to see in the Justice Estimates that the efforts that have been made have resulted in lower incarceration rates. The adult correctional population has actually dropped by about 150 over the last four years. The youth incarceration rate has actually dropped by about 17 per cent in just the last two years. So, I would hope that the Premier would remain open and give some direction maybe in some of the clear terms he's chosen in some of the other items in the mandate letter to direct the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) to work with the Minister of Health and other ministers on expanding these problem-solving courts and not see it as a further expenditure but as a real smart way to reduce costs. But above that, get better results for offenders and create better public safety in our communities.

* (16:40)

Mr. Pallister: I thank the member for the intervention, and I recognize his sincere desire to see better results, and I share it, and it would be—I think it's clear that we're committed to trying every way we can to listen to Manitobans through the process in the coming year that we would be engaging in, and I've encouraged, sincerely encouraged members of all parties to participate in in terms of the performance review exercise, reaching out to, not exclusively, but including front-line civil servants to hear what they have to say in terms of their ideas, their input on processes and techniques and measures that can be more effective and that can save money as well but always with—bearing in mind the need to achieve better results. And so I appreciate the spirit in which the member's raised this topic, and I—it is my sincere hope that we can, and I believe we will, through the consultative approach that we're taking in this respect, not just the performance review, but in terms of the regulatory, the red-tape exercise as well, that we can find some real savings and really assist ourselves in being able to do more in respect of the things that we need to do to alleviate our longer term concerns about social circumstances such as the

member raises and other economic concerns, economic development concerns as well. These are not entirely separate from one another, obviously, and the synergies need to be understood.

If we can do a better job of creating a healthier, more competitive economic climate, clearly that will assist a number of Manitobans who are looking for work or are looking to upgrade their skills in a new work environment. Give them an opportunity to do so, give them an opportunity to find their potential here in Manitoba—that's, of course, what we want to do.

So, yes, I think I very much feel that we're on the same page in respect of what—where we need to go. It's more, I think, a question of timing, and it's the balancing act that, quite frankly, we recognize needs to happen in terms of moving us back in the direction of a balanced approach that's sustainable over time. We're committed to doing that. We're not—we're certainly not willing to jeopardize our front-line services in any respect in the process of doing that, but we need to make progress on what has become a almost chronic structural deficit situation over the last number of years in Manitoba in order to make sure that the changes we make benefit Manitobans not just today but also going forward in years to come. The—back to the fiscal again, that the fiscal situation is—has deteriorated somewhat over the last few years, and it is without doubt that we need to get a handle on that now. There's real possibility of the interest rate increases. There is the risk of a further credit downgrade, credit rating downgrade as a consequence of the situation we've been handed. And so these will put additional fiscal pressures in terms of debt-service costs on the Province that will erode further our ability to invest in the kinds of preventative things that the member is raising and that I agree have to be a greater focus of us, of all of us, going forward, and whether it's in Justice or Health, social services, in a variety of areas.

Mr. Swan: Well, I think we can also agree that the Justice Department often takes on a lot of the failures, if you will, of our society. And the Minister of Justice and I agree, then I expect that we can agree today that many of the issues being dealt with by our justice system, whether it's within the correctional system or whether it's trying to manage people in the community, it's that these are not simple issues; they're complex, and the responsibilities cut across a number of different government departments. With that in mind, I'd like to ask the Premier why the

Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet has not been re-established.

Mr. Pallister: No, member's not accurate in that, and that committee will play—certainly play an important role moving forward.

I wanted to put on record because I had undertaken to do this yesterday for the member from Flin Flon if I could that. He had asked me some questions about workplace safety, and I was explaining to him about the initiatives that have been undertaken in Manitoba to improve workplace safety. He was saying—well, and I understand from his background, because he was a very strong union member, and I was raised by one and was one, that he wanted to give credit to the union movement for basically all the safety improvements in the province.

And I was explaining to him that there have actually been a number of really important initiatives generated—instigated at the public-service level, outside of formal union organizations but also at the private-sector level, and one example of those was the—is the work safe program the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association's built. It's really been effective, and I would—I'll just give one example to the members that I thought they would find of interest. I've got a few here, and I'll share them with the members, but workplace safety talks, they—my understanding is they distribute these documents on a regular basis to members of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association.

I had referenced yesterday a number of the training schedule seminars that they do and this, again, I would emphasize is not an ideological program. It is offered to unionized and non-unionized people on an equal basis. So, people benefit from this program whether they have signed a card or not. In the future, they'll all have had the right to a secret ballot, so that'd be a good thing. But, certainly, one of the ones that I thought was timely, I was reading through with great interest the positive advances that they've made, was a safety talk piece on protecting workers from heat stress. And, in this building, I think it's important to realize that's an important aspect of working in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, isn't it? Yes.

Working in the heat and doing heavy physical work can affect the body's cooling system. If your body is unable to cool itself, you can experience heat stress. Now, I believe the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) may have had some of this stress as

recently as Sunday when he was running in a certain lengthy race with high humidity. This safety talk is to raise awareness of workplace hazards that can cause heat stress. There are precautions you should take any time temperatures are high and when the job involves physical work.

Now, I recognize here that our jobs usually don't involve an—a large amount of physical work, which actually can be a problem in and of itself, but, nonetheless, the following safety information will provide you with training on assessing hazards that could lead to heat stress and instruct on implementing control measures to prevent heat stress.

Now, the danger with these programs is that people who read this material sometimes will just take it for granted. They know this. They'll say, oh, it's just common sense. But I have to share with the members of the committee, as we were—I shared yesterday some experience of the driving on country roads safety talk, and I got a giggle out of the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), because, of course, he's proficient at driving on country roads because he's done it all his life. But, as I was returning to my office with a certain staff member, that staff member, I take it, somewhat less rural than myself or the member for Flin Flon and others in the Chamber, commented to me at how informative that particular piece of our Estimates had been for him, and how he had benefited from learning, being the city boy he is, had benefited from learning about the dangers of soft shoulders, about the correct way to deal with narrow roads and narrow bridges, about watching for animals. Veterinarian here has probably—

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): The minister's time is up.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, there was a copious amount of information contained in that answer. Maybe I'll just start by asking the Premier (Mr. Pallister): Is a government that provides more information or less information the one that's more accountable?

Mr. Pallister: So I'll go on and talk about the protection, because I do want to put this on the record for the member for Flin Flon who had asked for this information yesterday. I do want to get this on the record for him, so he'll appreciate it I know. And I should mention the risk assessments and hazards, in terms of protecting workers from heat stress, is important to a lot of Manitobans. And

workplace safety and workplace health are important issues for all Manitobans.

* (16:50)

And, of course, I should mention that the following are identified as hazards for heat illness: high temperature and humidity, which, again, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) would be familiar with on Sunday; direct sun exposure; no breeze or wind; low liquid intake; heavy physical labour; waterproof clothing—now I was surprised when I first read that, but then anyone who's worn waterproof clothing would know that this does create a heat danger as it contains heat within close proximity to the surface of the body.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include headache, dizziness or fainting, weakness and wet skin—and the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) should note this because this is—irritability or confusion is also a symptom; thirst, nausea or vomiting. And, again, symptoms of heat stroke may be—are the—continue, and there are some—here are, again, they may be relevant to the question, or may be confused, unable to think clearly, may stop sweating. Apparently that—I guess that means you're dehydrated when you stop sweating.

So there are control measures and safeguards that one can take. Implementing the following safe work procedures to eliminate or reduce heat stress—now this is very relevant to us who work here in the Legislative Assembly. I can share with the members, the very day that I was appointed to Cabinet back in '95, I was appointed as Government Services minister, and as I was being congratulated by my colleagues, at least half of them said air conditioning to me as they shook my hand.

And it is—I understand the previous administration may have looked at this, the possibility of air conditioning the building, but it is a very hot building in the summer. We know from sitting here in the summer of '13, as an example, right through the summer when we were fighting against the PST hike that it was hot for many members, not exclusively the members of the government either. And that heat is a danger in a workplace.

When I was minister, I actually got a—I was in the office about 7 in the morning, and I got a call from a friend of mine in Portage la Prairie. And he works with the government, and he was calling me to complain that the air conditioning hadn't come on at the provincial government building on Tupper Street

North in Portage la Prairie, if you know the one that goes—there's an overpass on that street. And he was complaining, and he said the air conditioning didn't come on; it's not fit to work in here today. And I said, well, what's the temperature, and he said it was 24° already. And I said, well, it's 29° where I am, right? So it—but he was right to point it out because the heat in the workplace can, you know—and in this place especially, there's a lot of heat. And as the member for Wolseley knows, often very little light.

Now, providing training about the hazards leading to heat stress and how to prevent them, drinking plenty of fluids, drinking often and before you are thirsty, drinking water every 15 minutes, avoiding beverages containing caffeine, as well modifying your work schedule and arranging frequent rest periods with water breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas, and gradually increasing workloads and allowing more frequent breaks for workers new to the heat or those that have been away from work.

So we now have two new members of the Liberal caucus that haven't worked in—very likely, I shouldn't speak for both of them; I'm not 100 per cent sure, but I know we have two new members there, and I think three new members of the NDP caucus that have very likely not worked in a non-air-conditioned building on a hot day in June before. And these are very important, I think, advisory notices. Important enough that the workplace safety initiative of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association saw fit to distribute them to their members and to benefit their employees.

So I put this on record because I have seen this building at times, certainly in July or August especially—and on this side of the building, I have seen temperatures well in excess of 30°. I expect the members may have as well, and that poses a health risk for employees.

So, I'll go on with more information at the next opportunity.

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Order. The honourable First Minister's time is up.

Mr. Altemeyer: The Premier (Mr. Pallister) referenced earlier—when we were having a lovely session of me asking questions and him not answering them—that the affordability chapter in our budgets only talked about auto insurance, hydro rates, and natural gas rates. And I just—you know, it didn't sound right to me.

And I just, you know, it didn't sound right to me. I don't think that's accurate, but I'll go double-check, and, well, wouldn't you know it, I happen to have a copy of our budget from a couple years ago, Budget 2013.

On page C26, there's a comparison of personal costs and taxes for four different types of families: a single person earning \$30,000 a year; a single parent, one child, at \$30,000 a year; two-earner family of four, at \$60,000 a year; two-earner family of five, all together, at \$75,000 per year.

Here's some of the things listed: provincial income tax, health premiums, family employment tax credits, child benefits, property taxes, property tax credits, provincial sales tax, gasoline tax, carbon tax credit, mortgage costs, child care, utilities, auto insurance.

So, when Manitoba, as it turns out, finishes third most affordable for three of these families and is the most affordable for the fourth one, and seeing as how this entire section of the budget has mysteriously disappeared under this Premier's leadership, someone who's claiming to be accountable and transparent, I ask the Premier, based on his previous answer, when he was mistaken earlier today, was he dehydrated, dizzy or vomiting?

Mr. Pallister: Again, I appreciate the member's feeble attempt at humour, I really do. But the member is mistaken yet again.

I'll quote for him from a Canadian Federation of Independent Business news release of May 11th, 2015. [*interjection*] And I encourage the member to listen; it is a skill that he could develop.

According to new research from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business: In 2015, a two-income Manitoba family of five making \$75,000 will pay \$3,285 more in taxes and utilities compared to Saskatchewan. The provincial government often touts affordability as Manitoba's main advantage, but the facts don't match the political spin. Our research shows that families are saddled with huge costs to live here, and those costs have significantly grown over time.

In their analysis, they included utilities, the gas tax, the PST and income tax.

And they go on to say that over the last 10 years Manitoba's affordability has declined by a whopping \$3,335. In 2006, living in Manitoba was \$50 cheaper than living in Saskatchewan for the average family.

By 2015, Manitoba had lost its advantage, and its families now face a \$3,285 disadvantage. While it is true that Manitoba families pay less in utility fees than families in Saskatchewan—and that's the measure in The Affordable Utility Rate Accountability Act the government conveniently put out, which ignored taxes, ignored the impact of taxes.

You see, Manitoba homeowners don't get to just pay some of their bills. That's why affordability, generally, in the common sense of Manitobans, would include taxes. Yet the government put an act together which ignores taxes. Interesting. So, if Manitobans weren't, you know, paying their taxes, I guess that there would be a more affordable place to live.

But under the NDP it became a less affordable place to live. And Manitobans know that. Perhaps a lot of them were, you know, made nauseous by the changes that the government put into place.

But, certainly, the fact remains that Manitobans deserve transparency and an honest discussion when it comes to our provincial finances. Looking only at provincial utility costs creates an affordability myth that misleads Manitobans.

It's time the government stops the spin and faces the facts that we've lost our competitive edge.

And then the CFIB goes on to call on the Manitoba government to make us competitive once again with Saskatchewan through personal income tax relief and reducing the PST, something that we're committed, as the new government of Manitoba, to do.

So, the member could, if he'd like to, do a little more research and he could read the Manitoba Prosperity Report, which was put together by the Manitoba Employers Council, the largest confederation of employer associations in Manitoba, representing more than 24,000 individual employers and employer associations, in which they evaluated 25 comparative economic government and taxation indicators and showed that Manitoba was last or second last under the previous administration in most of those. So—

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Order. The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

HEALTH, SENIORS AND ACTIVE LIVING

* (14:50)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Just going back to something I had asked, I believe it was on June 16th, but I don't have it just in front of me. But we were sort of going through the list of items that the minister had committed to getting follow-up. With regards to collected—the summary of the collective agreements. I know the minister had given me a pretty comprehensive list at the table, but I think he had also committed to providing sort of a list in writing. And I understand—I think our Clerk also thought that was the case.

I'm just wondering if the minister could clarify if that is, indeed, the case, that he could get me a—just a list in writing.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Yes, I apologize if, maybe, we weren't clear or there was some misunderstanding. But we will get you that list. I'm sure we can get it to you before the end of the week.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, appreciate that.

The other question, just to follow up on a earlier line of questioning and trying to understand the secondment arrangements and sort of how that works within the minister's office, the minister had mentioned his special assistant had been seconded from the WRHA, I believe. Can he just confirm what her salary would have been at the WRHA before coming as a special assistant here to the building?

Mr. Goertzen: I understand from officials that it was the same.

Mr. Wiebe: So the same number that he gave me as being paid as a special assistant was the same amount that she was receiving. And what was the—what was her job title in the WRHA?

Mr. Goertzen: The title was as a project manager in the renal program.

Mr. Wiebe: And thanks for the clarification.

So I'm just going to jump around a little bit, if the minister will bear with me, to a couple items that I'm not even 100 per cent sure if I've covered, but I think will take a bit of a different track. So we'll sort of go through these and, hopefully, if I cover something I've covered before, he'll understand.

With regards to doctors, I'm wondering if any doctors have left the province since April 19th.

Mr. Goertzen: That's not information that we have currently. I understand that the College of Physicians and Surgeons would normally provide a—some sort of an update on a semi-regular basis.

I do know, and it's an important issue the member raises, that many, many doctors have left—over the last 15 years have left the province, and it's caused great challenges in many areas. And I recognize that there are always going to be some areas where there are challenges to attract doctors to. That challenge exists for every jurisdiction across Canada and for every Health minister and for every government. But it was, certainly, not made any better over the last 15 or more years, as many doctors left.

And it's one of the reasons why when we talk about a recruitment retention strategy, I want to put as much emphasis on retention as recruitment, because if you recruit doctors but they don't stay, then it doesn't get you any net benefit, necessarily. So we certainly want to have an emphasis on both of those.

I might also want to read into the record for the member because I'm anticipating what his next question might be, and if he's going to ask me how many vacancies there are within the nursing workforce, I can tell him that there's been an increase in the vacancy rate of nurses in Manitoba. There was 814 vacant positions in 2005. There are currently 2,268 vacant positions, so you can see the significant increase of vacancies for the nursing position over the last number of years.

Mr. Wiebe: So, with regards to doctors, that may have left the province, and I can appreciate the minister wants to look at retention and improve retention. In fact, I think they've indicated that the goal—one of the goals of the government is to have the most improved retention rate for doctors.

So I guess my question is twofold: What is the retention rate now and how do we compare to other provinces?

Mr. Goertzen: I understand that that is, you know, information that's currently being developed in terms of both the provincial retention rate historically, but also what the national averages would be, so we don't have that information currently.

Mr. Wiebe: Is that something that the minister would be—would commit to getting back to us when that information is collected?

Mr. Goertzen: I don't know when the information will be finalized. I don't want to put a commitment on the record that won't allow us to meet the, I believe, it's a 45-day requirement now for responding to answers, because we might put ourselves in jeopardy of that if the information isn't developed by then, but, certainly, if the member wants to connect with me again at some point, if we have the information, I'm not averse to sharing it.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, and I can, you know, let the minister know why we're concerned about this. One of their platforms, one of their election commitments was that, you know, all doctors who would leave the province would have an exit interview done and there'd be some dialogue around that and presumably that information would be made public in some form and that Manitobans would be able to understand that and, you know, hopefully, find ways to keep doctors here in this province.

The other element, as I mentioned, was that the retention rate was a priority, and to improve that and, as I said, in fact, the most improved province in Canada with regard to retention rates, and it's a bit concerning that the minister doesn't have at his fingertips what the retention rate is. It's a bold claim to make if he doesn't even know what the retention rate is now or what the retention rate is across the country and, I mean, these are admirable goals. I don't think anyone would question why keeping more doctors in this province would be a good thing, you know, something the previous government did.

I know—you know that we believe helped keep some doctors, other graduates in Manitoba was the tuition rebate program which, when I asked the minister previously about that, he, you know, failed to say clearly that that's something that they would prioritize and keep as an option for students.

So these are great goals, but without knowing the baseline, without understanding where we are

now and without seeing what those benchmarks are and what those goals are, you know, I'm questioning how we can expect to know what the real results are until we understand where the baseline is.

*(15:00)

So I can appreciate that the minister doesn't want to tie his hands, or I should say more clearly, I guess, the hands of his department, in maybe collecting that information, but 45 days is certainly a long enough period of time for this work to be done. As I've said before, I'm sure the officials in his department have been hard at work looking at ways to fulfill these commitments that were made during the election. So, you know, this is something that I'm sure is well under way, and simply asking for this information to be brought back to the committee within the required timeline, I think, is a pretty reasonable request so that, you know, we can work on improving those rates and improving the number of doctors here in Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, the member's correct on the issue of, you know, the challenge that the former government had in keeping doctors in Manitoba. It was a significant challenge, and we saw some of the results of there not being an overall strategy in place, not to suggest that had there been, for the previous government, that there would be a doctor shortage or that there wouldn't be some problems in keeping emergency rooms, particularly in rural Manitoba open. I recognize that that's a problem that all jurisdictions face, all Health ministers face and all provinces face.

So I'm not Pollyanna enough in my world to believe that the former government could've solved all of those issues. It relates to the retention rate. We've already indicated that we'll be looking at a doctor recruitment or retention strategy that will, we hope, be moving forward in the fall, and that's information, of course, that we'd want provided to them. So, as the member says, there are baselines, but then there are also goals that come forward as well. Some of the work in terms of doing exit interviews with doctors is already happening. I'd like to see it collectively uniform across the different regional health authorities, but some of it is already beginning and so there is movement on that front. But in terms of the specific day the member is asking for, I think it would be foolhardy for me to make a promise that I necessarily wouldn't be able to keep to him.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the other element of this, of course, and it's something I believe even the minister when he sat in the opposition benches was keen to ask and certainly members of his caucus were keen to ask about rural ERs and the doctor retention when it comes to rural communities. And, you know, this is something, again, that was emphasized during the election, something that this minister went out on the doorsteps and talked a lot about, and one of the elements they mentioned in their platform, in fact, was a commitment to education in local communities. And just wanted to get some more information on how the minister sees that playing out, how this government sees that they could support that and accomplish that objective, specifically when it comes to both rural communities and, of course, in the North.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I think the member raises a good point about local training as much as possible. We had some of that discussion yesterday in Estimates from his colleague from The Pas, I believe, and those were good questions. Obviously, wherever you can train as locally as possible, as close to an individual's home, there's a broader chance or a greater chance they're going to stay within that community, not obviously a 100 per cent chance by any stretch of the imagination, but it certainly does make sense that wherever you can have as local training as possible, that would be beneficial.

And so that commitment in terms of looking at those opportunities, I think was something that was important to be made during the campaign. I know there's already, even at this early stage, been some discussion with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities in terms of how recruitment and retention can continue to be improved. Looking at a very local level within the different municipalities, I want to see that discussion continue and perhaps be enhanced, but I also don't want to prejudice the outcome of the doctor recruitment and retention committee either. I don't want to tie their hands to say that, you know, one particular solution or another might be better than the other. I recognize that I'm not an expert in this field, that I come to it as a layperson in terms of health and sometimes, of course, that can be a disadvantage in terms of trying to learn some information, but sometimes it can be an advantage in not pretending that you have all the answers. And I don't believe that I have all of the answers on this particular file, and I don't want to overprescribe, per se, the solution or the answer for

the recruitment committee when it begins and moving forward in the fall.

Mr. Wiebe: Just to follow that train of thought, then, the recruitment committee, can the minister tell me who sits on that committee, and can he give me a sense of the timeline of the work of that committee?

Mr. Goertzen: It hasn't been populated yet. I know there's work coming forward from the department in terms of ideas of what would be—maybe not necessarily specific people, but, certainly, broad-based positions in what kinds of people would add value to that kind of a committee. So there's a number of different initiatives that the department officials are working up in terms of those kinds of suggestions. I look forward to seeing them over the summer.

I know that we have come to an agreement for the House to rise on June 30th, but I can assure the member that if he comes to my office, I'll be there almost every day in the summer. The premier—or the former premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), will know that that's part of the job, and, even when the House rises, doesn't mean that the government stops working. And so we'll continue to work through the summer on that initiative.

Mr. Wiebe: Again, just to clarify, does the—is the recruitment committee an internal committee in the sense that it's, you know, formed and populated with individuals from within Manitoba Health or from within the WRH—or, sorry, the RHAs—or is it made up of third-party people?

Mr. Goertzen: I would anticipate it'd probably have representation from all of those elements. I think it's valuable to have those who are—have outside expertise, from outside of the system maybe to take a look at things. I think it's valuable to have individuals who have internal expertise who've been involved for a good deal of time to provide guidance and instruction. There might also be some from outside the province who have expertise, and I'm open to that. I don't think we've been overly dogmatic in terms of who should or shouldn't be on these types of initiatives. I think we want the best people who can bring forward some of the best ideas, but also work collectively and collaboratively to come forward with recommendations when their work is completed.

Mr. Wiebe: Going back to rural emergency rooms and rural facilities, can the minister provide a list of all the rural ERs and the hours that they're open?

Mr. Goertzen: Did the member want me to read that into the record, or did he want that in a written form?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I think, in the interests of time, it would be okay if you provided me a written list. But, if it's something he'd prefer to read into the record, I give him that option.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm advised by my officials that that could certainly happen by the time the House rises at the end of next week.

Mr. Wiebe: In addition to that, could he—or could the staff, then, provide also information about the staffing complement at each one of the facilities?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I believe we can get the member that information. It'll take longer than the first set of information he was looking for on the number of ERs and the hours just because it involves collation of staff numbers.

So I don't want to give the member the exact time that'll come back, but it'll—it would come back within the prescribed rules that we have here for returning information.

Mr. Wiebe: Can the—just to, again, jump around a little bit here in building on a series of questions that were coming from the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) yesterday with regards to—I believe it was yesterday.

* (15:10)

An Honourable Member: Days blur, one into the next, I tell you.

Mr. Wiebe: I won't put that on the record, but I agree.

With regards to the stroke unit, I believe the minister spoke about consultations that were under way or were—be—going to be under way shortly. I just wanted to know who the minister is—either has he met with or is planning to meet with, and just, sort of, who is going to be shaping that process and maybe he can just talk a little bit about how far along that process is.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, it's just not overly far along. Not as far along as anybody would wish. We haven't been in government for 17 years.

But the initial process was to ask for some advice from department officials as it relates to, you know, potentially location of a stroke unit and the different elements it would take to bring it together. So there hasn't been outreach beyond immediate

department officials that have, sort of, line responsibility in that area. That's something, I think, that would be valuable, but there isn't enough at this stage that would be—that would require consultation. But, certainly, that is something we've committed to in the election in a particular time frame and we're moving forward on attempting to achieve that commitment.

Mr. Wiebe: With regards to the wait-time task force, can the minister give us an update on the time frame for that task force to be formed and, again, who's the minister going to bring together to sit on that task force?

Mr. Goertzen: Just some initial names that have been bandied about. They haven't all been approached or agreed to form, so I'm not sure that I want to throw their names onto the record here for fear of getting a nasty phone call about somebody being identified if they're not willing to serve. My—in terms of the time frame, certainly, I would expect that, you know, by the end of the year there would be a task force formed with a particular mandate to move forward on.

Mr. Wiebe: And, again, is this task force going to be formed from within the department? Is this going to be made up of primarily departmental staff or staff from the RHAs, or primarily from people from outside of the system?

Mr. Goertzen: No, it's a good question. We've had some discussions already at the staff level in terms of composition. Certainly, we feel that, you know, doctors, nurses should be involved in some form or fashion. The service providers—so the regional health authorities—would want to have some representation, I suspect, because they're the ones who are delivering the service.

But the member asks about those who might be outside of government, outside of the department. Absolutely, I think it would be important to have an outside view, an outside vision. Those might be people who have experience in the health-care system in Manitoba. They might be people who have experience in just operational flow of facilities. They may be people from outside of the province.

Again, I don't want to limit the pool of individuals who might be valuable on that committee governed less by who the individuals are in terms of the place that they come from and governed much more by what value their bring to the discussion.

Mr. Wiebe: With regards to the formation of the committee—or, sorry, the task force—and then, also,

the results of the task force, will that information be made public and will that information be transparent as to who and how they were chosen to be on the committee? And then, once the work has been completed, will the information that was collected by the task force, will that be made public?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, certainly, I would want whatever information is able to be made public to be made public. The member will know that there are certain restrictions that all governments have to adhere to. There's proprietary information, sometimes it has to be protected. There's privacy information that's particularly acute in the health-care system, that has to be protected. There might be some legal reasons why information can't be released.

But it would be my hope that as much information as could be released is released. It would be beneficial, I think, for that to happen. But it would have to be within the restrictions of the law.

The member will know from being part of the former government, there was many different things that were not released and were not released in a timely fashion, were not released in a fulsome fashion. One could argue that it may not even been have released in a legal fashion, Madam Chairperson. I won't delve into the issue of Tiger Dams or severance packages that weren't released and they were protected. I won't delve into the issue of confidentiality agreements that were signed on legal cases. I wouldn't want to be overly political at this stage of the committee, but there certainly have been things in the past that have been extraordinarily difficult in terms of trying to find information.

My hope would be that information that is legally or able to be released without breaching confidences could be released.

Mr. Wiebe: And, with regards to the committee that the minister had mentioned with regards to personal-care homes, and increasing the number of personal-care homes, once again, can the minister just talk about that committee. Has it been formed? Who sits on it? Is it within the department or external, and maybe just talk a little bit about the transparency that he expects from that committee as well.

Mr. Goertzen: Again, I think it will be all of those things in terms of bringing together people from various disciplines. The member may know from the release of not only my mandate letter, but the letter

of Legislative assistants assigned to ministers, and I might add as an aside, that that was the first time I believe in the history of the province of Manitoba that mandate letters were made public to help in terms of accountability and transparency.

But the member will certainly know in reading those letters that the legislative assistant, the very capable and able member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) has been assigned as the legislative assistant for the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living. He will also know from reading the mandate letter that the capable and extraordinary member for Rossmere will have his particular role in the personal-care home strategy, and so we expect him to take a leadership role in that, and then there will be others who are formed.

So I can certainly advise him at this stage of the game that the member for Rossmere will play a leadership role within that committee and, in terms of providing things publicly. It is certainly, I think, the expectation of the committee that they will work to develop not just a single model—and I want to make that clear that we're not focused on one particular way of doing things when it comes to meeting the personal-care home crunch that we have in the province of Manitoba. There are specific financial restrictions and financial goals that were outlined in the mandate letter provided to me by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and we expect that those goals to be met as appropriately and as ably as possible.

But we're not going to limit the different good ideas that could come forward to meet that goal. We have a certain destination point that's been identified for us within the mandate letter, but there are different ways to reach the same destination. So we're going to be challenging different individuals in groups to come forward with their ideas. They obviously know the goal in mind and they know the target to which to meet, but the manner in which they meet that target or bring forward proposals, I think, is limited as the creativity of Manitobans.

Mr. Wiebe: Again, just jumping around a little bit here, the member mentioned nursing vacancies, and I know he had reviewed the number of nurses in the province, but I don't remember if we had gotten down to the level of detail of part-time versus full-time.

So I'm just wondering if the minister can provide, when it comes to nursing, how many of

those individuals are part-time and how many are full-time.

* (15:20)

Mr. Goertzen: I'll provide the member as much information as I can. Currently, in Winnipeg, for the RN positions, there are a total of 7,811 positions. The total positions filled are 6,754, leaving total positions vacant of 1,057.

When it comes to the RNEP stream in Winnipeg, there are 107 total positions. There are 74 that are filled and there are 33 that are vacant. RPN stream in Winnipeg, there are a total of 155 positions; 142 filled and 13 vacant. Comes to LPNs in Winnipeg, there are a hundred and—1,099 positions, of which 957 are filled and 142 are vacant.

In the southern RHA, the RN positions, there are 2,394; 1,898 are filled, 496 are vacant. In the Southern Health authority, the RNEP positions, 64 are total positions; 48 are filled, leaving 16 vacant. RPN stream in southern, 336 positions, 268 filled, leaving 68 vacant. The LPN stream, there's 1,316 positions; 1,035 are filled, 281 are vacant.

In the northern RHA, there are 412 RN positions; 297 are filled, 115 are vacant. The RNEP positions are 11; there are eight that are filled, there are three that are vacant. There are no RPN positions allocated within the North. There are 130 LPN positions, of which 86 are filled and 44 are vacant. And I believe that's the information I have for the member.

Mr. Wiebe: From those staffing numbers, can the minister tell me how many are part-time and how many are full-time positions?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm officially advised we would have to provide the member the breakdown of full-time—current breakdown of full-time versus part-time, and we will provide that for him.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate that, and could the minister also provide information on overtime and how much overtime is being paid?

Mr. Goertzen: I can provide for the member that in 2012-2013, there was overtime payments of \$33,131,333. In year 2013-14, the overtime payments were \$39,929,618. In year 2014-15, the overtime payments were \$46,823,872. And that is the most recent data we have.

Mr. Wiebe: All right, thanks to the minister for that. I just wanted to, again, jump back and do a little bit of cleanup on a item that we discussed, I believe, right off the beginning of these Estimates with regards to staffing within his own office. It's on page 25 of the Estimates books, with regards to Professional/Technical, is the line item, salary and employee benefits within his office. It's indicated in the Estimates book that there are five FTEs. I just want to clarify, I believe the minister had said currently there are only two FTEs, two staff people that are filling those FTEs that are filled right now.

Mr. Goertzen: How many of those positions were filled in the minister's office—there are two filled within the minister's office, the two aforementioned individuals, Ms. Gordon and Mr. LaPage. I know at the beginning of these Estimates he was lobbying strongly for me to have more staff and indicating that that's a very, very few staff to have within the minister's office. I—if he wants to make that lobby to powers that are higher than mine, I will not stop him. I will do nothing to restrict him from making those efforts and I wish him well in that.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I will join with him in lobbying for those positions to be filled in the sense that it's the expectation of my constituents and, you know, frankly, of all Manitobans, that if there's an issue that requires the minister's full attention that he has adequate staff people there to answer the phone, to answer those questions immediately and get the information up the line to the minister's attention so that he can respond directly, which is what the expectation I think that most Manitobans have of the Minister of Health and all ministers of the Crown in this province.

So—and I'm just trying to sort of understand, again, the process by which people can expect service, you know, my office, but also the general public. When we, you know, write an email or write a letter to the minister, phone into his office, what's the structure in terms of who's answering the phone and who's gathering the information and responding back to the public?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, there's a couple of elements to that. The member's, you know, we mentioned earlier on in this Estimates that the department receives about a foot and a half to two feet of mail each and every day, and that would only be mail. Of course, that doesn't include email and it wouldn't include phone calls. So there's no question, I suspect, that it

is probably the highest volume of correspondence that comes into a single department in government.

I can tell the member anecdotally, I suppose, that the number of calls in my own constituency office have gone up 35 per cent since I was appointed the Minister of Health. That might be people who simply see the phone number for the constituency office and choose to phone there. But there's been a dramatic—I think using the word dramatic is fair—increase in the volume of calls that my office has that have become health-related. I believe that the process for—someone calls into the office; there is an individual who answers the phone and certainly takes their concern. It becomes an intake issue, and it is then directed to the appropriate place, either within the office or within the department to receive a response. And it's logged, of course, through the government management system for correspondence so that there is a tracking record of it.

Mr. Wiebe: So, again, just to clarify, with only two of the five positions being filled right now, is it the minister's intention to fill those vacant positions, and can he give me a timeline on when he expects those positions to be filled?

Mr. Goertzen: Now, one of those vacant positions would be from the—my deputy's office and certainly she's an extraordinary hard worker. I don't know that there are days that when I leave this place—I'm usually later than 8 p.m.—on most of those days she's still working in the office beside me. It would certainly be my expectation that at least one of those positions would be filled for support for her for the hard work that she does, and I know the member would join me in thanking my deputy and all the staff for the work that they do, and I would never begrudge that one position for her.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay, so I'll just try that again: Is it the minister's intention to fill the two positions, then, within his office, understanding that the other position, the fifth position, would be in the deputy's office and would be, I guess, the purview of the deputy to fill.

* (15:30)

Would the minister be planning on filling the other two positions within his office?

Mr. Goertzen: There are no plans to fill those two positions at this point.

Mr. Wiebe: I think that's what I've got.

Madam Chairperson: Hearing no further questions, we will now proceed to consideration of the resolutions relevant to this department.

I will now call resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$34,807,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Provincial Policy and Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,857,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Health Workforce Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$27,990,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Public Health and Primary Health Care, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,989,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Regional Policy and Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$48,858,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Seniors and Active Living, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,639,451,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$198,187,000 dollars for Health, Seniors and Active

Living, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,123,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty the sum not exceeding \$1,202,000 for Healthy Seniors and Active Living, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 21.1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 21.1. At this point we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration for the last item.

The floor is open for questions.

Resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,680,000—[interjection]

RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,608,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Health, Seniors and healthy living.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of committee for supply is for the Department of Families.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next department? [Agreed]

The committee recessed at 3:35 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:41 p.m.

FAMILIES

Madam Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

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

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I do.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed.

Mr. Fielding: I'm pleased to provide an opening statement for the committee. And first of all, our government recognizes that the well-being of families is really central to the growth of our communities and that supported families resilience is critical to the future prosperity of all over Manitoba. This is why the budget, 2016 budget, provides about \$175 million in new funding for the Department of Families, which represents about a 10 per cent increase over 2015-16 year, about a 6.2 per cent increase over the forecasted 2015-16 year.

The funding will ensure that services to families who are the most vulnerable are not compromised. It recognizes the importance of our mandate as well as the growing demand placed upon our programming. The Department of Families is committed to improving the circumstances of all Manitobans, in particular, low- and moderate-income families with children. It recognizes the difficult and often interrelated social and economic challenges that Manitobans can face when they're trying to get ahead. This is why we've added responsibilities for the employment and income programs and Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation to Department of Families. It's important to strengthen the social services delivery by bringing together a full range of programming, policy, services in support of Manitoba families and communities. In terms of early learning and child care, we know that quality child-care options are important to Manitoba families and to assuring parents are able to work, attend school or training. As a result, the 2016 budget provides additional \$6.4 million in early learning and child care, which represents an increase of about 4.1 per cent to the financial assistance and grants over 2015 levels.

The 2016 and '17—in 2015—or '16 to '17 rather, we also make it easier for families with children to get ahead by simplifying the process governing the

operating and operations of child-care facilities with a focus of home-based child-care spaces. We are—we'll engage stakeholders and strategies to increase child-care spaces through the province and will enhance scholarships and bursary opportunities in recognition of the important roles that early child-care educators have when inspiring the potential for our children.

We are also—we also continue to work collaboratively with other provinces, territories and federal government towards development of a national early learning and child-care framework that they announced significant new fundings for in the provincial—rather the federal budget. And we believe this will benefit Manitoba children, families and communities for a number of years to come.

In terms of help for low-income families, our government is committed to ensuring that low- and moderate-income families do not need to spend their entire paycheque or rent so they can access income supports when they're experiencing financial challenges. This is why the 2016 budget is providing additional \$50.3 million for a 13 per cent increase to employment and income assurance programs from last year, fully indexing it, of course.

The funding will provide a full indexation of the 75 per cent of median market rents through the Rent Assist programs, so the benefit levels enable families—households to access reasonably priced market—private market accommodations, which we think is important.

The increase will also help maintain existing income assistant benefits and programs for eligible Manitobans, addressing rising caseload costs and increasing in utility costs for—and municipal fees, such as transit and water fees—water and sewer fees.

Ensuring income assistance recipients have access to employment and training supports is an important priority for, not just this department, but also for our government. I'm pleased to advise that we will continue to work closely with the Department of Education and Training to provide opportunities for people receiving income assistance to prepare for and find work.

Housing. Our government knows that the housing costs are typically—for a typical family, are some of the most greatest costs that you'll have when you're trying to chair—care for your family in any capacity. Good quality, safe and affordable housing is fundamental part of our approach to addressing

poverty. We also know that housing provides a stable base for low- and moderate-income households who also have access to other supportive and preventive services, which is important. Housing facilitates positive outcomes in many other areas. It really plays an essential role in the successful achievement of community economic and social development initiatives.

This is why a 2016 budget will include 45.9 per cent increase in transfer payment to the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation. The 56.6 per cent increase will support construction and allow for necessary improvements and maintenance to be made to social housing through its multi-year capital plan.

Recognizing the availability of affordable housing also facilitates economic development. Our government intends to honour the development agreements that are currently under-in place with project-to project proponents construction of new and social affordable housing. We know that the towns and cities throughout Manitoba will prosper when there are places for people to live, work and play.

In terms of help for vulnerable persons, our government recognizes that many Manitobans face physical and mental disability, family crises and other challenges throughout their life circumstances. We know that it is the vulnerable of our province that are the greatest risk, and so we have positioned the Department of Families to provide better care for those who require additional supports.

Child safety is, of course, a priority, and I'm sure for everyone, including our government. The child welfare system helps to ensure that families and communities provide for the safety and the well-being of children. This is why the government is investing \$20.9 million in Child and Family Services. Some of the highlights include support for our two mandated Child and Family Services agencies in providing protection, prevention and early-intervention services, including support for youth aging out of care.

Support for the COACH program is an intense—which is an intense, year-long community-based treatment and academic program that provides emotional behaviour and academic wraparound intervention and support to 30 boys and girls with profound emotional, behavioural and academic issues. Support for Families First program which

provides home-visiting support to families with children from pregnancy to school age.

* (15:50)

To improve child safety, our government will also introduce The Protecting Children Act, which we had the pleasure of briefing, I know, some of the members of the opposition earlier on today, to make it easier to share information amongst government departments, Child and Family Services authorities, community service providers, law enforcement agencies, while planning for or providing services to at-risk children and their families.

To support adults with intellectual disabilities and to help them to live a productive, safe life in our community setting, the 2016 budget also includes additional \$49.7 million for funding Community Living DisABILITY Services programs. This represents about a 14.4 per cent increase in funding and is really responding to the growing demands for services and increase in Community Living disABILITY Services caseloads. It will also help address the challenges and costly supports to—costly supports required to serve participants with complex medical and behavioural needs and responds to the increased needs of long-standing program participants who are aging and require additional services and supports to addressing these complex, challenging issues.

This is also the reason why Community Living disABILITY Services programs are engaged in a transformative initiative that will maximize resources and see the program to move the assisted-information models forwards. The person-centred approach will result in a greater transparency, equity and consistent service levels for all.

As minister, I can add—with the added responsibility—the accessibility of Manitoba act, I am committed to a full and timely implementation of this act. Further, I can advise the Department of Families will focus on a client-first approach for persons with disabilities, which will include reduced wait times for disability services, measured to promote the full employment potential of Manitobans with disabilities in effort to educate businesses about the many benefits.

With that, it looks like I'm getting called off, so I do want to thank you for the opening remarks.

Just a question for you, Madam Chair, do I need to introduce some of the staff that'll be joining us, or that will happen later on?

Madam Chairperson: We'll go on with that.

We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Miigwech to the Minister for Families for his opening comments.

I will just start with saying Families is a huge department, and I take my responsibility as the critic very seriously. And part of those responsibilities is to learn the department as much as possible. And so I'm actually really looking forward to the next couple of days so that I can ask as many questions as I can to just get a really—a comprehensive, better understanding of the department. So, just so that the minister and I are on the same page, my, you know, resolve here is to kind of understand all of the programs, how the departments have amalgamated and that vision and that mandate going forward. So I will preface my 'coffents' by saying there's going to be a lot of questions, and, you know, hopefully, a lot of patience in respect of just trying to get a better sense of this department.

And what I will also say from the very beginning is I just want to acknowledge staff. I know that there are phenomenal staff that work in the department, some of whom I know and some beautiful faces down there. So I just want to take this moment to just acknowledge everybody and all of the work that you do and somewhat apologize for all of the questions that I'm—have, but it is really just in an attempt to get a greater understanding of this really big department. And so, you know, in the spirit that I can do my job, I need to have that information.

And so I'll just share this as we begin. Personally—like, I'm not interested in the political back and forth. I've—you know, respectfully, I've sat in some of the Estimates, and I've seen the political going back and forth, and I'm not interested in that. I'm—that's not where I'm going to spend the next, you know, God knows how long we're going to be here. I'm not interested in that. I just really want to have an open, honest, respectful discussion for the betterment of all Manitobans that we work for.

You know, Families has a lot of different components to it, but one of the components that I think both the minister and I can agree that is really critical is protecting children and the children's aspect of the family.

And, you know, I will share with the minister that, you know, as I'm sure the minister will remember—or maybe he wasn't there, but during my inaugural speech I spoke about my childhood. And part of the piece that—of course, we don't have a lot of time—but, you know, part of that childhood was that I was apprehended as well. I was apprehended, I think, at the age of six, and I spent, I think, about six or seven months in care.

And I remember that, you know, as grateful as I was to be away from the situation because it was very, very—I mean, the only way that I can say it, it was very, very brutal. And so, even though I was glad to be away from that situation—some sort of reprieve—at the end of the day, I, you know, all I wanted was to be with my mom. Right? And, so, you know, that's the biggest lesson from my own personal life and from the years of working with families.

You know, families want to be together. Children—at the end of the day, we have this intrinsic need that we love our parents, and we want to be with our parents. And we want to be in our communities, and we want to be among our extended families. You know, that's where our spirit lies; that's where our emotions lie. That's where our culture lies. So, for me, you know, at the end of the day that—the work that I do is—I always try to keep in mind the children, and that they deserve to be with their parents. And how do we do that?

So, again, for me this is, you know, obviously we're elected to do this work, but for me it's also very personal. And so I approach this in that spirit, in the spirit of respect and in the spirit of just getting to understand this really big department so that we can move forward in a really good way. Miigwech.

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

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

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

Mr. Fielding: I'd like to introduce Joy Cramer as the deputy minister of Family Services; Angie Bruce, the chief financial officer and assistant deputy minister responsible for administrative and finance division;

Michelle—[*interjection*] Jennifer Rattray, assistant deputy minister responsible for Community Engagement and Corporate Services; and Diane Kelly, assistant deputy minister responsible for Child and Family Services.

I believe that's all that's sitting at the table here, right now.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Global.

Mr. Fielding: Is—just in terms of the approach. There's Families; there's Housing. So, obviously, we're just going to deal with Families today. Is that the will of the committee?

Ms. Fontaine: Yes.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Fontaine: I guess, before—I guess let us start with some easy questions here.

Could the minister please provide a list of all the political staff, including the names, position and whether or not they're full-time or part-time?

An Honourable Member: Sure, just a—

Madam Chairperson: Honourable Minister.

* (16:00)

Mr. Fielding: Just a question before. I just want to understand process. So we have—this is the first time going through this for myself as well. So we have time allotted before we are able to answer to some—good.

Well, there's two political staff in our office. One is a fellow by the name of Shawn Nason, who is my special assistant; and the other is, just hired, a lady by the name of Melanie Maher [*phonetic*], who is the executive assistant to the minister.

Ms. Fontaine: Can I ask the salaries for both staff, please?

Mr. Fielding: Just a point of clarification, do you want the classification or do you want the actual salary amounts?

Ms. Fontaine: I'll take both.

Mr. Fielding: Just—we are trying to get the information on the salaries. If it be the will of the committee, I could give the classification right now and then I'll be able to read, in the record, once they will be able to obtain the information.

Mr. Nason—Shawn Nason. His employee classification is SMP—SPM—sorry; and Melanie Maher [*phonetic*] is—I'm saying it wrong, but it's EX—is it EXM? EXM.

Ms. Fontaine: And so is that all of the political staff for the minister?

Mr. Fielding: That is the political staff in my office. Are you referring to the constituency as well, or I'm assuming that's different—yes, so the answer is yes.

Ms. Fontaine: Can I get a list of all the staff in the deputy minister's office, along with their salary range, whether or not they're full time and their—

Madam Chairperson: Honourable minister.

* (16:10)

Mr. Fielding: Okay. We have Joy Cramer. It says she works full time, but I know she works a lot more than full time so. We have Nicole—is it Thorkelson, sorry—who's full time as well. Sorry—Joy's classification, too, is DR3, and Nicole's classification is PM2.

Then you have Cathy Kolochuk who is full time as well, and that's considered a PM2. And then you also have Andrea Watts, which is considered an AO1.

Ms. Fontaine: And will the minister also provide me with their income?

Mr. Fielding: Absolutely. Getting used to this. Absolutely we will, they're just acquiring the information right now. So we'll read that into the record once we do obtain that information.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister provide me with a breakdown on how the department is actually structured?

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for the question. The department is really structured into, I guess, four different components, so I'll maybe go through them. And the first one is, of course, reporting through the deputy minister is Administration and Finance, and we have an assistant deputy minister, Angie, of course, is right here. We've got the Community Engagement and Corporate Services, which, of course, is, our assistant deputy minister is Jennifer Rattray. We even have a third division, Child and Family Services. And Diane Kelly, of course, is

assistant deputy minister, and I believe the title is also director of Child and Family Services. And the fourth is the Community Service Delivery, and it's Michelle, and I always say Michelle's last name wrong, but it is Dubik. EIA, of course, is also administered under—well, it's housed under Michelle's area, but I believe it's managed through Jennifer Rattray's department, through Community Engagement and Corporate Services.

Just a follow-up question—there is clarification. Do you want me to outline the structure for housing as well—Manitoba Housing?

Ms. Fontaine: Yes, I know we talked about doing CFS today, but I think that we're going to have to kind of just broaden it so that we can kind of look at the whole department, which, of course, includes all of that. So maybe, for today, we can just kind of dissect this and then we'll get on to—if that's okay.

Mr. Fielding: So you're saying that the Housing component will go tomorrow, you're saying.

Ms. Fontaine: Sorry, I didn't hear you, what did you just—

Madam Chairperson: Honourable minister.

Mr. Fielding: That the Housing component will come another day, possibly tomorrow is what you're saying.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm not sure at this point. I mean, there's a lot to get through here. So perhaps.

So I'd like to kind of just go through each of these four components of Families, if the minister would be so kind as to explain exactly what the Administration and Finance component does.

* (16:20)

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

The finance and administration services really, you know, I'll go through kind of a number of the elements for it but—

Madam Chairperson: A formal vote has been requested in another section of the Committee of Supply. I am therefore recessing this section of the Committee of Supply in order for members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote. If the bells continue past 5, this section will be considered to have risen for the day.

The committee recessed at 4:20 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:37 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume considerations for the Estimates for the Department of Families.

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Fielding: Well, first of all, the finance administration services division—it's a—obviously, it's a broad area, so I'm just going to provide the committee with some information on it. Really, the objectives of the committee is to maintain an active comptrollership function by ensuring the financial and administrative policy, services, reporting systems, and developed to maintain and effectively administer to meet the needs of the department in the financial control, accountability, reporting, safeguarding and protection of financial and physical assets.

It is also to provide central financial management services in accordance with the government legislation and established financial administrative policies and procedures and provide a broad range of operational and administrative 'resport'—support services across the department.

In terms of activity and identification: plans, organizes and evaluates department's financial, administrative and management activities; co-ordinates comprehensive budget Estimates planning and support services; responsible for financial forecasting and reporting as well as through revenues, accountability, appropriate controls; and provides the direction on financial and administrative policies, and operations procedures, practices to divisional staff.

Some of the expected results, I guess: to provide an active comptrollership function and ensure the financial and administrative matters are handed—handled effectively and efficiently while complying with the government policies and procedures; provide a continuum of financial services within the department, including guidances and leadership respecting all financial accountability, accounting systems, policies and procedures to ensure the continued financial integrity of the department financial processes and systems; and continue improvement in financial management accountability and control over department resources through enhancement of program and management reporting

and the provision of timely and accurate information to the department.

* (16:40)

It also provides comprehensive and timely financial reporting, relative department expenditures and revenues and identify—identification of existing and emerging financial trends of the department.

I'm not sure how much time I do have left, Madam Speaker—I do have some more time.

In terms of the accountability—the Agency Accountability and Community Initiatives, the Integrated Community Initiatives Unit. The Integrated Community Initiatives Unit of Family Services provides leadership co-ordination support for various community-based inter-department and department initiatives, including responsibilities for implementing the poverty-reduction strategy and administrating the non-profit organization Reducing Red Tape, which I think is important.

Some of the key results achieved talks about their work with ALL Aboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy, published an action plan on creating opportunities for youth, providing secretarial support to all—to the ALL Aboard Committee, who's work contributes to new provincial initiatives in poverty reduction and issued the 2013-'14 ALL Aboard annual financial report, which describes the performance on 21 regulated indicators, I guess, if you will, of 'proverty' and social inclusion.

That's, kind of, basically, I guess, their role in a nutshell. There is also a non-profit organization reduction of red tape initiative, provided technical and administrative support to over 100 participating non-profit organizations, consulted with the sector stakeholders to develop selective criteria in phase 2 of the NPO implementation and issue applications for phase 2 of *[inaudible]*.

So that kind of sums it up. I'll have to say I actually do really enjoy the finance side of these things, so it is actually—I do enjoy listening to the finance side, and I think that's a—it's an important area for government in any department, ensuring that you're spending your money wisely. And, so that's essentially what they're doing.

Ms. Fontaine: So, in respect of staffing for this particular component, of course, I know that the assistant deputy minister is Angie Bruce, who I have just an enormous amount of respect in—for.

I'm—I would like to know, in respect of this chart here, that's in the Estimates Supplementary Information Review, are these positions still accurate, along with the staff names? And what are the salary classifications for everyone in the department in this particular component?

Mr. Fielding: Just a—our staff is actually looking for the salary component that you had mentioned but, maybe what I can do—we have been able to identify the staffing in terms of the dollars and cents for salaries for—which you had asked for earlier on, Nahanni. And just about how much people are making.

So maybe I can read this in the record for your purposes: Shawn Nason, who, once again, is the special assistant to the minister—he is making \$74,291; Melanie Maher *[phonetic]*, executive assistant, is making \$62,600; Chrissy *[phonetic]* in our office here, Executive Support, is making \$45,600; Jacqueline, who's our appointments secretary is making \$55,600—Pikta is her last name. Kelly Davidson is making \$45,600, that's in my office as well; and Linda Andrews is making \$39,700.

In the deputy minister's office: Joy Cramer, making \$171,100; Nicole Thorkelson is making \$59,900; Cathy Kolochuk is making \$73,300, and Andrea Watts is making \$55,500.

So that includes all the people that are in the staffing component for both the minister and the deputy minister's office.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that, for getting those numbers.

Just for clarification for the record, as well, obviously, I know Joy Cramer is the deputy minister. Would you be able just to provide the titles for Nicole, Cathy and Andrea? I don't know if I got that.

Mr. Fielding: Sure, yes. Nicole Thorkelson, assistant to the deputy minister, and her classification is PM2. Cathy Kolochuk is assistant to the deputy minister, Executive Support, and her classification is PM2. And the last one you had asked for was Andrea Watts, and she is Executive Support, administrative assistant, and her classification is A01 and, once again, that's \$55,500.

Ms. Fontaine: So, just for clarification, the staff are waiting on the other names in the—okay.

Could the minister—while we're waiting for that, could the minister explain the Community

Engagement and Corporate Services component to Families?

* (16:50)

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you very much for the question.

The question was about the Community Engagement and Corporate Services. I guess the question is, really, their roles and functions.

So, for the committee, it really is the roles are to provide policy and program direction and support to the department's program for children with disabilities, and early learning and child care and family-violence prevention programs; to license and monitor standards in early-learning and child-care facilities according to The Community Child Care Standards Act; to classify early childhood educators and child-care assistants; to provide fee subsidies to licensed facilities on behalf of eligible families, and to provide inclusion support funding to licensed facilities on behalf of children with additional support needs.

To provide strategic program support and policy advice on issues that affect department and delivery of social services to Manitobans; to provide leadership and direction on all department legislation; to lead and co-ordinate Manitoba's participation in intergovernmental relations with the other provinces, territories and, of course, the federal government related to social services; to lead, develop and provide Web services and related technical support for department; and provide leadership direction and co-ordination for information, decisions, support and internal communications.

To provide effective leadership, co-ordination and direction for range of core corporate services and functions that span the divisional responsibilities and priorities of the department to ensure that government policy and legislation requires—requirements are met; to administer the substitute-decision-making provisions of The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act; and to administer the Social Service Appeals Board.

Further, Madam Chairperson, I'll just add in some information about EIA, employment income assurance—employment income and rental assistance—it also provides effective leadership, direction, fiscal manage—financial management and support for Employment and Income Assistance; Rent Assist; health services; income assistance for

persons with disabilities; marketAbilities; building independence programs; Manitoba Child Benefit; and 55-Plus in accordance with the relevant regulation in government policy.

Ms. Fontaine: So, before I delve into each of these other components under the Community Engagement, I'm going to ask, again, in respect of the staff that are listed on this organizational chart, whether or not it is accurate, and what their classifications are?

And then I'm also wondering—I'll save that question.

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

For the Community Engagement and Corporate Services I believe you asked, and just, you know, we don't have to go through that question again, but you want their names and classification. Okay.

So, once again, Jennifer Rattray, who is assistant deputy minister, is, I see, an EX2; I believe that is her classification. There's Margaret Ferniuk; I don't see her classification but—XM2 is her classification.

Under Children's disABILITY Services, formerly, or sorry, Family Violence Prevention, is Tracy Moore, and she is P10. And then, under Fair Practices Office, there's Cheryl Roby. Okay, I don't have her classification. We can get that classification for you.

Under Social Services Appeal Board, that is Heather Hamelin, and I don't know if we've got her classification but we can provide that information for you. Office of vulnerable persons, that is JoAnne Reinsch; and once again we'll get the classifications for you.

Under Corporate Services and Administration, the executive director is Michelle Stephen-Wiens; that's in an acting role, and once again we will get the classification for you. And in terms of legislative and strategic policy, I think you met her today, Heidi Wurmman, and she's classification P10.

And the last person which is unfilled right now, it's a vacant position, which is Indigenous Initiatives director, which is vacant. I believe that is a newer position over the last six months or so. And that would be a classification as a P10. Let me correct myself here, PC0; PC0.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for those classifications.

And so, in respect of the pending ones, if we can get that, but also, I'm also requesting the amounts, the salary ranges for each of them.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m. committee rise.

FINANCE

* (15:00)

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

This section of Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Finance including Crown Services.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

We ask the members introduce the staff in attendance.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I have with me in the Chamber today: Mr. Jim Hrichishen, the deputy minister for Finance; I have the secretary of Treasury Board Secretariat, Ms. Lynn Rapshala-Kelln–Zapshala-Kelln, thank you; I have Giselle Martel, who's the assistant deputy minister for financial management and capital planning; and I have Chester Wojciechowski who is the executive financial officer in Corporate Services.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I have the sublime Kelsey Hutton with me today.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

As previously agreed, questioning of this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Allum: When we were last here on, I think it was Friday, we were trying to get some answers from the Finance Minister on his bloated deficit figure that he put out several weeks ago. We really couldn't get a straight answer from him. We were simply trying to find out why he had moved money that was ordinarily identified in the summary budget into the core budget, and then we believe that he did that for the specific purpose of inflating the deficit in the same way that he included \$143 million in federal revenues, money owed to the people of Manitoba, as part of his bloated deficit number.

In all of that, the intention, we know, was to make himself a hero next year when the—if, in fact, the feds pay off, if, in fact, other factors happen. Then he can present himself as a hero having slayed

the deficit, but we know that he started off with a phony deficit number in the first place, and we just want to make sure that that's on the record, that that's the position that we have and we'll be holding him to account on his phony budget numbers in the years to come.

But I think there's a matter of urgent public business that we need to address with the Finance Minister today, and so I simply want to ask him: Why, Mr. Chair, why did he not join the strong national consensus and support the deal on enhancing and expanding the CPP?

* (15:10)

Mr. Friesen: I want to say it was a two-part question that the member asked, so I'll answer the first part of his question and then I'll use my next response to engage with him on what I believe is an important conversation that I welcome on the issue of CPP enhancement.

And so, on the first issue, the member used the term a bloated deficit, and that's exactly what occurred in his own document of March the 8th. He uses the word bloated. I—we've talked about perhaps the more technical term is deterioration against targets. We've established clearly that it was the norm, not the exception but rather the rule under the NDP that they would set a budgetary target for a deficit and then they would incur a greater amount. So you would get that deterioration each and every time. As a matter of fact, we quantified that and said that the total overspend over and above the budgeted amount was almost \$3 billion for a period of 10 years.

So, first of all, the context is this, that on the March 8th document that the previous NDP government brought, which was not a budget but rather they called it an update, the member's own government stated that the budgetary target for loss was \$421 million, and that was on core government. And three–two quarters later—I guess that would—well, it would have come after that—this—that document would have been produced in March, and then in February–March of this year, so almost a year later, they produce a document that shows that the forecast for that deficit, that net loss, is \$646 million. So I agree with the member when he talks about bloated deficits, indeed.

Now, the member has somehow—wants to set the confines of this conversation so that he wants to pretend to be outraged that we were able to recognize

that there was further deterioration than what the member chose to disclose to Manitobans, although his own document acknowledges the same trend, the same deterioration against target. His documents showed from 421 to 646 a deterioration of \$125 million additional. So I don't accept his premise somehow, this incredible premise that while his government missed it every time that somehow it's not possible that there was further deterioration. That's exactly what there was.

On that subject, specific to his question about federal costs shared 2014 disaster financial assistance, the member understands that there were some significant water events in 2014. And the process that ensues is that the Province of Manitoba basically receives amounts back from the federal government in terms of compensation. So they expend amounts because we understand that in emergency circumstances you don't wait. You don't wait somehow until you've got the money in your pocket. You identify the areas and some of the costs that would have been incurred would have been provincial. And then the government applies for rebates to the government under the federal costs shared disaster financial assistance program.

In the case of 2014, the application probably would have been made in, sometime in '15 after the weather event—or after the flood event. And for whatever reason the order-in-council by the federal government was not signed in that '14-15 year. In addition to that, the order-of-council—order-in-council—was not signed in '15-16 and so that is the reason why it appears on the books for '16-17.

I assure the member that the practice is consistent with generally accepted accounting practices. It's—it would be consistent with similar practices in other jurisdictions. In other words, it can be identified, but it doesn't accrue in the case that the order-in-council is not signed and received. So that explains that cost and—or that explains that item.

And referring to the item that he brought last week about RHAs, it makes sense to us; health care is core government. And in this case, certainly, it's not our desire that RHAs run a deficit every year, but what—we identified that cost in core government.

Mr. Allum: Well, let's just put on the record the difference between our side of the House and his side of the House is we are transparent and accountable with the people of Manitoba when it came to the numbers, and the new Finance Minister relied on accounting tricks and accounting procedures to

promote a billion-dollar debt that doesn't actually exist, and for that we are very, very regretful.

I asked him about the CPP. I hope he will answer us forthrightly on that question as well. From our point of view on this side of the House, we know that he would have been well briefed and well prepared, knew exactly what he was walking into at the Finance Ministers' meeting along with the federal Finance Minister yesterday. And so to pretend that he wasn't sure or didn't know what to do, I think, is actually doing a disservice to the people of Manitoba. And more than that, he embarrassed all Manitobans by not putting a clear explanation of his position on the public record when he should have done so. So let the record show that as well.

I have a few other items I need to move to this afternoon, Mr. Chair. I want to ask the Finance Minister about the secret audit that he has undertaken. We read very clearly—very clearly—in the tender that he put out that it would be a secretive process, that there would be very little that was made public, in fact, none made public. In fact, the tender bidders were assured that everything they said would be kept confidential.

* (15:20)

So what we need to know from the Finance Minister is exactly what's going to be made public because there have been, since then, been conflicting claims made by himself and the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and so we're trying to get a straight answer on what of that secret audit is going to be kept—is going to be made public.

We also want to know how he defines the terms economy, efficiency and effectiveness, which were terms used in the tender and yet provide no explanation for it. That could be very subjective definitions, according to private sector understanding of the public—of how these things operate in the public sector. It's much different.

As I've said many times, Mr. Chair, we're not making widgets here; this is a complex—government is a complex business and so what we're trying to understand from the Finance Minister in relation to his secret audit is how much will be made public and how does he define the terms of reference that are used in the tender.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I'm not sure which answer the member would like first, but perhaps what I'll do is he asked a question about CPP and, again, made some very inflammatory assertions, so I'll address

those first and then we'll go on. We can have a conversation about our value for review—value-for-money review that we have undertaken and I assure the member is not secret, unless he doesn't understand how government tenders are issued and advertised. So perhaps there's some education that needs to be done about the MERX system. Certainly, what he thinks is secretive is the open and available process by which government advertises all of its tenders to suppliers and potential suppliers.

On the issue of transparent and accountable, he said his government was transparent and accountable. I won't make much of this, Mr. Chair, because we could have a long conversation about all of the ways in which the former government actually showed exactly the opposite to be the thing they valued. How many times did this party ask for documents through the FIPPA process? And they made excuses and they hung on to requests, and they did not honour them, and they claimed that they couldn't honour them and they blacked out entire documents and didn't give the information to Manitobans.

They said they were accountable but accountability, according to our bond rating agencies, would have meant there would have been more determination to hit their financial targets. Accountability matters, but this is a government that failed to meet its financial targets each and every year. But, moreover, they told Manitobans that they were moving in the right direction. Former Finance ministers actually used language like closing the gap and ahead of schedule, even when they knew full well that their actual progress against their stated targets was deteriorating.

They withheld that information from Manitobans, so I take great exception and so do Manitobans when this member tries to portray the record of his government in anything that would resemble the terms of transparent and accountable. No government was less transparent than that one. No government was less accountable than that one when they brought a PST hike after the 2011 election, after telling all Manitobans that they would not raise the PST.

On the issue about the CPP enhancement, I'm happy to invite a conversation there now. I think that's got to be noted in the record that that has to be the closest thing that the member has put on the record to being conceived possibly as a compliment. He said I would have been well prepared and well

briefed. I would inform him that I was both of those things.

What the member's not acknowledging is I don't think he understands where this conversation has been from 2009 until this time. I was the critic for Finance, so I know this file somewhat. I don't have the—didn't have the benefit that my counterparts would have had on the other side, but when you're in opposition, you just work very hard and you avail yourself of materials, and you get your hands on all the resources you can and you do an awful lot of reading.

So, on this issue, I knew where this had started in 2009. And, of course, the member has to acknowledge that the landscape has changed significantly since this idea was first introduced in a context that could only be described as very, very different economic circumstances. Consider the barrel price of oil in 2009. Consider how the economy in Newfoundland was still humming along. Consider—well, and we know then, as well, I should acknowledge, too, that at that time, we were already looking at that economic downturn but, still, that price hadn't been reflected in—to the extent that it now is in commodity prices in other sectors.

So, when the conversation started, some economies were much stronger. In the time since then, we've seen some—we've seen political regime change in provinces. We've seen that in the federal government. And, even if I speed up to now, I can assure this member that even until a few short weeks ago, the whole purpose of the June meeting was to encourage conversation around four proposals that were prepared by a working group, sanctioned at the December meeting of Finance ministers.

Somewhere along this line, in the very brief past now, there was a decision undertaken to accelerate this timeline. That meant that going into the meeting, there was one preferred item for conversation but, even then, I assure the member, that there was a changes—there were changes made and changes proposed to that piece, so I look forward to expanding on my answer the next time I have a chance to put words on the record.

Mr. Allum: Well, if the Finance Minister wanted to be transparent and accountable, he would have held his position open for the people of Manitoba. I asked him last Thursday in question period; he refused to answer.

He goes to a meeting in Vancouver with his other Finance colleagues and then cuts out when everybody else is standing on the stage, including Quebec, by the way, which didn't sign on to the accord yesterday—eight other provinces did, including Saskatchewan and British Columbia. And my suspicion, and our suspicion, is quite obviously that he was taken by surprise that he didn't be able to hide behind Brad Wall yesterday, and instead he was exposed and didn't know what to do, so he took off.

And that's unfortunate. The minister talks about transparency and accountability on targets; he doesn't have multi-year forecasts in his budgets, so we don't really know what his targets are. So, again, he's playing fast and loose with the—on the 'transparency' and accountability plan.

In addition to that, the summary budget of—forecasts an increase of 7.3 per cent in federal transfers. We need to know where that money is going and how he's going to be accountable for that money when it arrives. So, what's he going to do with that increase in federal transfers and how is he going to account for it to the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: Back to my response on CPP. So, now the member has to acknowledge that where Finance ministers were starting from, within four days of the start of that meeting, changed; where, all of a sudden, there was a proposal that was being identified as a preferred option. And Finance ministers go into the meeting.

Now, I want to assure the member that even in the context of that meeting, ideas are offered, positions are represented, preferences are presented.

And, so the member's wrong when he asserts somehow that this was a fixed position kind of exercise, that he somehow seems to suggest that somehow there was an item that all we needed was ratification. And I want to assure him that that's not how those conversations take place.

I was pleased to be able to present a perspective on behalf of Manitobans, reflecting on the consultation that we had done, even on the very accelerated timeline we were proceeding on in this jurisdiction, having been elected less than nine weeks ago, having, you know, been named minister probably seven weeks ago, having brought a budget on May the 31st and proceeding into budget debate and then to Estimates.

* (15:30)

But I was pleased to be able to present perspectives on behalf of Manitoba. I was pleased to be able to offer, also, items that we felt could strengthen the proposal. Items that we'll continue to discuss and reflect on and present to different groups for consideration.

Really, what we felt is that we acted in principle. We felt that, where other jurisdictions had the advantage of time to have consolidated a position and spoken to various groups—stakeholder groups—talked around the Cabinet table, talked around the caucus table, done that analysis—there was a widespread recognition—I would say unanimous in that room—that, this time I present a real challenge to a government that was in its place for less than nine weeks.

But I challenge the member on, somehow, this idea that our position is entrenched or something. He could not be more wrong. Retirement affordability really matters. It truly does. The member must understand that the CPP was never designed to be a single-pillar retirement system. And comments that were made in question period belie a belief on the side of the NDP that, somehow, if you invest in CPP, you don't have to do anything else. And nothing could be more far from the reality. As a matter of fact, if he were a member in the '60s, when the CPP was brought—and I would encourage the member to read some of the arguments that were presented then. Even then, the authors of this plan talked about a three-pillared approach to retirement savings.

It's clear what CPP does. On the basis of contributions made by employers and employees it is designed, then, to provide for—in retirement—25 per cent of pre-retirement income. The proposal on the table is modest, is incremental, is fully funded. But, within that battery of discussion items, the member will understand that there will be a variety of positions taken, and there will be a variety of views represented.

It's important that we get this right. This is generational. It matters not for the seniors now, and the member—one of the members earlier today seemed to have suggested that seniors could benefit right now if we were only chosen to enact these measures. He doesn't seem to understand that these measures will help no one for a number of years yet because the fund has to be—the amounts have to be available in the fund.

So this is for income earners coming up. It's also not going to significantly affect low-income earners.

That was another assertion made this afternoon by the NDP, which is factually incorrect. They don't understand that that cohort of income earners is, actually, well served by our present plan. I would challenge, still, that improvements could be made, but it shows how important the issue of financial literacy really is that there are so many members on the other side of the House that simply do not understand the basic 'tenets' of the CPP.

We need to get it right. That's why consultation matters. We took that principled position that our first agenda item on this was to have that conversation here with Cabinet. We will undertake to have that conversation, and we will proceed from that point in a manner that serves the best interests of Manitobans.

Mr. Allum: Look, I'm hoping to get an answer about federal transfers from the Finance Minister, but let the record show that the Finance Minister left for Vancouver a Progressive Conservative and came back a reformer, not unlike his boss and not unlike Stephen Harper before him.

And that's the position that he's taken. He embarrassed the people of Manitoba on the national stage yesterday, and now he's trying to parse an answer together that, frankly, doesn't hold water and only shows that it's ideology that motivates him and not the people of Manitoba.

He says that he's—went and shared positions on behalf of the people of Manitoba yesterday. Well, I can tell you, he wasn't talking for seniors, and he certainly wasn't talking for families. He wasn't talking for women. And he wasn't talking for minimum-wage earners, who he's already failed in this budget once. So let the record also show that. That, when he was there, he was speaking for a very select business group. And we know who they are, we know that they work in his office, and it's disappointing that he should take that tack.

I want him to answer a question about the federal transfers, if he would do that. We also want to know from him today, is—an announcement was made, I believe, by the government on the North End sewage-treatment plant. We know that in his \$108 million of cuts there were cuts to capital. Is the North End sewage treatment plan in jeopardy because of his decision to make radical cuts to infrastructure here in Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: I want to answer first the previous questions the member wrote—raised about the fiscal

performance review, and he asked some questions there. I want to make sure wherever he's putting a question on the record I'm endeavouring to get him the response.

We're proud to be undertaking an effort that will seek to measure, for the first time in a long time in this province, government spending in order to identify if there are areas of opportunity available for the government to identify overlap and duplication of function, looking at areas in which we can reduce waste, areas in which we can identify opportunities for savings. Now, the member seems to take a view that such a review couldn't possibly offer advice to a government. He should remember that this business of core government is a \$14-billion enterprise, and in no way does this reflect on the incredible work that's done every day by our civil service. And, as a matter of fact, I just had a chance to attend the Civil Service Commission annual awards event on Friday. I slipped over there right from Estimates and got in late, but I was able to see departments recognizing exceptional work in categories that include innovation. I was so pleased to see that, and the Deputy Minister for Finance gave one of those awards, and he indicated to departments, he said, now, who are the people in government that lead in bringing innovation and change? And then he looked at the audience and said: It's all of you; it's all of us. And he challenged individuals within their areas of responsibility to think in ways that constantly ask the question: How can we improve? How can I take responsibility for this area? What could I suggest?

But I also remind the member that there's a lot that government can do to create the environment in which that kind of activity is prized and valued. And I would suggest that the minister's question is wrong inasmuch that it seems to be based on an assumption that all spending is sacrosanct, that it cannot be questioned. We strongly suggest that all government spending needs to be constantly questioned. We need to ask ourself: Is this the best way to do what we're doing? What do other jurisdictions do? Are there opportunities for us to purchase on a broader scale? Are there opportunities for us to reduce red tape? And all of this is work that there's actually expertise within government for, but also expertise outside of government for. And I would suggest it would be very naive to not proceed here, especially in lieu of the fact that other jurisdictions have gone here. I'm thinking right now about the Drummond report in Ontario, and I don't know if the member's had a chance to read that considerable report.

* (15:40)

But I've had chances to read through full sections of that report, and there was a perfect example of how government drew upon the expertise of an extra-government entity to inform decision making—doesn't mean that government is compelled to adopt all those things put forward by the report, absolutely not. But it creates options that might not have been on the table and it draws in the expertise of others.

Now, we have opportunities right now inside of government in all areas, but I even think of my own in Central Services, in the very capable Mr. Scott Sinclair, who heads up that particular area of function within government. And we're excited about possibilities there that are really only available to government, because people in our civil service had the forethought to locate various entities there in a manner in which they could be dressed—addressed globally. It might provide some opportunities. We might decide there's areas that we won't progress, because we've got a very Cadillac version of it right now.

But, in any case, he—the member asked a question specific to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. I would inform him that those are conventional terms that are used in any kind of audit. He should understand this is not an audit because audit apply—implies a very different type and depth of analysis. A review is a more comprehensive analysis, but this analysis will still use the same terms of reference: Are activities implemented at reasonable cost? Are the results appropriate in relation to the inputs and do actual outcomes match intended outcomes—actual versus intended? This is important analysis and we cannot wait to get started, and nothing about this is secret.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the member a few questions. Congratulate him, first of all, on his election win and ascendancy to the big chair there in Finance. I know he was the critic for a number of years, so he already knows a lot about this department.

And I have to tell him that, you know, as far back as 2010, his federal cousins in Ottawa were 'in-tuned' enough with the CPP issue, the Canada Pension Plan issue, that they were prepared to make an arrangement—I guess that's the best way to describe it—with the—in the minority government with the NDP to—I'm sure the member—the minister would like to hear the explanation. I'll give him a minute.

Mr. Friesen: Sorry for the delay.

Mr. Chair, could the member just repeat that question so I can answer it for him.

Mr. Maloway: Yes, the minister's federal cousins, you know, have a—probably a longer history than he does in, you know, dealing with the CP issue, the Canada Pension Plan issue. As far back as 2010, the—when the Harper government was in full stride, they were contemplating signing an agreement with the Jack Layton NDP caucus at the time, in the summer of—I believe it was 2010—that would have seen the Canada Pension Plan double in—well, the demand of the NDP was that it double. But the Conservative federal government was looking at something substantial, not doubling it, but they were looking at coming, you know, somewhat close. Like, we wanted to double it, maybe they'd go up by two thirds, and this was being done at the parliamentary secretary level to the Prime Minister. And I know it was reported to caucus by our critic from Hamilton Mountain that, you know, an arrangement had been made and there was no signed agreement on the matter, I believe, but it did involve the—would have involved the support of the federal Conservative government for one more year.

So they were being flexible, Mr. Chairman, at that time, the federal government and, of course, what happened was that almost at the same time, we started to check—there's a lobbying registry there, and the Prime Minister started getting visits, daily almost, by investment houses in Toronto, you know, to try to convince him that it was a better idea not to go that route.

So I appreciate the minister. He is being, you know, pushed around a bit on this issue, but, I mean, the optics of this are not good for him. I mean, given that he was at a federal-provincial conference and, basically, 90 per cent of the provinces—or 80 per cent of the provinces signed on and Brad Wall, who would—was known as one of the holdouts on this issue, found this deal acceptable to him.

So I have no idea what the issue could possibly be over there, on the government side. But knowing that it's a very centrally run operation with only really one person, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in charge of that whole group over there and in charge of the government, that I'm assuming—I'm making an assumption or could be stepping out a little bit, but I'm assuming that the minister was taking direct—under the direct control of the Premier in these negotiations, because I don't see any reason why. I

see this as a very modest increase in the CPP and, certainly, far less than what his own federal government—and, by the way, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) was a minister, at that very time, in that federal Conservative government. Member for Assiniboia was there at that time. The Premier himself had actually gone, in 2008, but he was there prior to 2008.

So I just find it amazing that you could have a federal Conservative government willing to make major increases in the support to the Canada Pension Plan. And now, six years later, you've got one of the provincial cousins is reluctant to go along with what is essentially a fraction of what the Harper government was prepared to sign on to.

So I'd like to ask the minister to comment about that.

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for the question. We were doing so well there before he threw me under bus and tried to suggest that there was only one person in charge, on this side, which couldn't be further from the truth. But I would suggest to the member that's better than having no one in charge, as with—was the case previous in the last nine months of the NDP's government here.

No, we're a team and could—I could not be more pleased to be part of this team, this caucus, on the PC side. It always—it has impressed me about our Premier (Mr. Pallister), the degree to which he puts real responsibility in the hands of those around him and then trusts them to do the job that they've been assigned. A true demonstration of leadership and I've appreciated it. It means there's big shoes to fill and a very steep learning curve. I've alluded to that in the past. I know that we all find—whether you're a new member in the House, sitting the first time, I remember what a steep learning curve that was, or whether you've got other assigned responsibilities.

I appreciate the question, and the member is right in that he reflects on the fact that the landscape has really changed in respect of CPP enhancement from where we started. And he and I both acknowledged that this was an issue at one time. Talked about by a federal government and then when that position changed, it was a conversation led, by and large, by Ontario with a very different approach to this. But, even so, even with the Ontario model, even though it planned to push out the X axis, if I can use it that way and talk about the, you know, the amount of income earners who would be contributing to CPP, in the Ontario case, pushing it

out as far as \$98,000 in income. And, even though it planned to provide a much greater degree of pre-retirement income to retirees, they did push that for a long time and, in some respects, it would have been the work of Minister Sousa and the Government of Ontario that brought us to this point.

* (15:50)

The minister is wrong in the assertion somehow that we stand opposed to the change. That's the not the position that Manitobans—Manitoba has taken. And he does reflect and say the optics of this don't look good. I'm willing to accept the verdict that for a few days the optics might not look good if it means that on principle we are recognized to have stood our ground and made sure that we are proceeding in a manner that makes sense for all Manitobans.

And I will allude to the fact, like I told him in an earlier answer to his colleague, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), that the timeline of this is very challenging for Manitoba having been a government for less than nine weeks. The changes undertaken on this file and in respect of the most recent proposal are significant. The acceleration to the timeline from favouring a decision in December only two weeks ago—less than two weeks ago—to favouring a decision made in that room at that time was going to be significant for everyone, but most significant to the member inside that group of provinces that was newest to the table.

We acknowledge that. I acknowledged that in discussion at the very beginning of those—in the context of those meetings. But that did not stop us from contributing to the discussion, from raising points. I believe—I look forward to the conversation that I'm welcoming, even this week with Cabinet that will inform our direction. If the member wants to know was consultation done? Yes, consultation was done even in advance of this. But consultation will continue to be done because now we have one item that has been considered that we can present.

So the member needs to acknowledge this, but in terms of optics, perhaps it was his government that was too concerned about optics. I'm more concerned to proceed on principle than I am to worry about what others in the room might think about us. I think what Ottawa and the other provinces will know over time is that we will approach every issue in earnestness, that we will give it full consideration, that we will reflect the views of Manitoba and do what is in the best interest of Manitoba, taking a long view. Retirement income counts. It counts enough

that it's worth getting right. That's the position we take. I don't mind if that means for a few days it means that we're separated from the bunch.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the member regarding the—under business transformation and technology, that would be page 82 of his Estimates book. I'd like to ask him about the SAP system. As the member may know, probably will know, that that ERP system that the government selected way back, what, 15 years—it may have even been the Filmon government that did it. But its implementation was around that period of 1999. They decided to go with SAP over other choices and there have been several upgrades to the SAP system. I'm not sure which upgrade phase we're in right now.

But I do notice that, you know, they can save—the government can save a lot of money by leveraging that system. And I know in Nova Scotia a number of years ago they managed to save money by having, like, the biggest hospital in the city of Halifax and the government in Nova Scotia all on the same platform rather than going with a different provider. And I don't know whether any work has been done here.

City of Winnipeg uses a different ERP system than we do, I believe, and I don't know why that is, but I think the member, you know, should maybe take another look at this and see if he could leverage this a little more. He kind of indicates that there's about 300 government offices, but I have no idea how—you know, which ones they are, and 84 hospitals. So I'm assuming he's got penetration into a lot of the government services at the moment. But there should be some, you know, interest, on his part, anyway, to look at cutting our costs by making sure that maybe the City of Winnipeg or other cities take on this system.

The other issue I want to ask him about—and by the way, he may have to get back to me on this. I appreciate—I'd like an update on where we're at with SAP and what are your plans going forward? Are you going to continue with it? Are you going to go with Oracle or one of these other suppliers?

Now, I want to ask you another question, too, on this issue of government online programs. The government online programs now are largely in-house, but I'd like a list of the programs that you have or plan to be doing in-house versus the number on specifically the ones that you're outsourcing to the private sector. You know, there's always been that argument that if we could somehow make the

government online programs transactional, as opposed to just purely informational, that we could make them transactional, that we could actually make money offering the program.

And I know all governments across the country have had, you know, different approaches here, but I'd like an update as to how many of our government online programs are provided in-house by the government, how many are transactional and money-making and how many of them are currently outsourced?

So I need information on that, and I'd like to also ask the member, before I finish my questioning here, on a question or two on MTS, the MTS sale or deal. We have essentially a—well, let the minister answer that question and then I'll ask them my final question on MTS.

* (16:00)

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for the question. It's good to see that a member over there's actually referring to pages of the departmental Estimates and asking for information pertaining to these pages, because we've seen very little—few references to actually asking questions in these areas.

So, on this issue of central services and SAP, I accept the question. I accept the premise, too; this idea that there could be an opportunity here for increased efficiency. I mean, we have said this is where we want to go in the macro and, in a system like this, yes, there could be an opportunity.

Government has already done a lot, you know, some of this work right now. Like, I understand, when it even comes to the WRHA, that, you know, they're now using SAP and that, you know, that provides for better integration between systems. I understand that many of the GREs don't use SAP and I, you know, to standardize that could be very cost-prohibitive. I am—I would suspect that that analysis is ongoing and that, from time to time, these decisions are undertaken to determine if there are opportunities, or if there are encumbrances that would simply make it unworkable. So I would say that, just in terms of, you know, where these systems are in place.

I understand that, you know, SAP was the basis even for the student financial aid service, and we know that there was a number of challenges in respect of that. So, obviously, it's important to get it right.

But we can provide the information that the member's asking for. He was asking, specifically, for some sets of information on SAP, as well as he was asking for government programs, in terms of online programs, how many in-house and how many are outsource. And we can provide him a list of those programs, as well.

And I accept the premise of the member on this, as well. I've seen, in other jurisdictions, where governments have talked about the ability to monetize programs that are built and say, is there an opportunity for government to actually, you know, realize a revenue gain because of something that some expert in-house has built. I've heard it specific, too, to, I guess, the area of health care. Digital innovation is—it happened so quickly and we have many people who are talented in systems.

And it reminds me, somewhat, of growing up in an agricultural area, and you see a farmer who has the brain of an engineer. You go back 50 years and you'll see some piece of equipment that a farmer has manufactured with some tools that he had on hand and a welder and steel, and you ask how he managed to make that. He says, Well, I had to; we just had to use it. It's been some of those very humble beginnings in agricultural manufacturing that have led to some of the real leaders in the field that we have now in Manitoba. In the same way, I've heard in Ontario—and this was, actually, part of the Drummond report's findings in health care—talking about the opportunities that might be available to government to monetize based on technologies that were being created for things like even iPads and, whereby, doctors were—and other professionals—other medical professionals—developing quick systems to allow them to identify or to collect data and report. And they realize that other sectors—or, other jurisdictions—would be interested in this. And somewhat—sometimes they weren't even aware.

So I accept the counsel. I believe it will be—that will be, probably, something undertaken by the—that fiscal performance review when that tender is awarded. I would imagine that those kinds of things would be inside there, but I would suggest as well those same considerations could be made, as we go forward, with our quality health-care review.

So I accept it. We'll provide the member with the information that he has asked for and attempt to get that to him in accordance with the rules of these proceedings that have some conditions on them to require that the information comes back.

Mr. Maloway: And the member—minister will find out rather quickly that, you know, his departments in the government will always make an argument for—that they need a proprietary system and it won't work, you know, whatever's being used in Saskatchewan won't work because of size and stuff like that, or in Alberta. And the reality is if you could have an exchange program for a number of these programs where something that's developed in Saskatchewan could be traded with something that's—right? But that runs against the profit motive of a company that's developing the program, right?

So, if the member—minister would look into that a little further, I think he's going to find lots of opportunities, but—and he'll find some resistance from his own departments who are going say, you know, that system is not to scale for our needs and we have to spend a gazillion dollars more to develop that.

Now, I want to just make a couple comments about the Bell-MTS deal, and put to the member—the minister a proposition here that his federal cousins back in, you know, the period since Stephen Harper became the prime minister, when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was an MP with that same Conservative government after 2006, and the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) was a Cabinet minister in the government when I was there, 2008 to 2011, the federal government deliberately made a move to ensure competition in the cellphone business. I mean, the industry was moving towards, you know, three competitors across Canada, but it was his federal Conservative government that intervened, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, that intervened in the market and basically held off, I think, for a period of time.

The spectrum—the member—the minister will know what a spectrum sale is, but it's where you auction off capacity to cellphone providers. And the Conservative government at the time, supporting, basically, the view of the Competition Bureau in this matter, made certain that a fourth company got a very preferential position in the spectrum sale. And that company, I believe at the time, was WIND. Now, I think it's still around.

And so they made a major effort to hold up the industry, to stop the cannibalization of the industry in a reduction in competition, to promote this fourth carrier, right, and only to find that five or six years later their provincial government here in Manitoba is doing the exact opposite. And it's not only

the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and former MP from that Conservative federal government is out there cheerleading, you know, like putting on his pompoms and out there cheerleading for a deal which runs absolutely counter to the former federal government's proposition that there must be four carriers in the country.

So I ask the member, and I don't mean this to be antagonistic towards him, I'm just saying wouldn't it make more sense for a new premier to hold back a little bit and do some research on this matter and then just understand the implications of the deal and perhaps not be so quick to judge the deal as being a positive one for Manitobans when we can, pretty much, prove that that's not what it's going to be.

So I'd ask the member to make a quick—as quick a response as he can because I'd like to ask him another question.

*(16:10)

Mr. Friesen: On the member's previous comment about looking beyond the scope of our own provincial borders for solutions, I accept the counsel, and I hope that we will have a good discussion on a go-forward basis.

I would suggest to him that, probably, you know, in some respects, a government department is not unlike a private sector department in that, yes, I accept his point in which systems can, over time, grow and stabilize around that, you know, that level of operation. And we always have to challenge ourselves about how we're delivering services, what services we're delivering, and the manner in which we're doing so. But I think that, also on this item, the tone really matters.

And I would suggest that the tone the member takes is more progressive than what we heard from his counterparts—or, not his counterparts, from his colleagues over time. I'm actually—I reflect that I'm encouraged to hear him speaking in that kind of language about opportunities. This is the same kind of commitment to partnership that I think created the ability for provinces, and the federal government, to do a better job of procuring pharmaceuticals—a drug agreement on a larger scale that got a better price because they didn't take a balkanized approach.

And I suggest that that is the exact reason why we spoke so favourably in terms of joining the New West Partnership. Not that that group would answer all of Manitoba's questions, but it would promote the

ability to have discussions about economy of scale and leverage and looking to others for expertise.

So we're fully committed to that. I believe tone matters and we will give that tone. And we have willing partners from—both within government and outside of government. We need extra-governmental partners on this journey we're going down. I would suggest to the member, even when it comes to access to capital, that is an area where we could learn from our neighbours—not just in the west but in the east as well. If we're going to build, we need to do it in a manner that recognizes that there's expertise both in government and outside.

On the issue pertaining to MTS, I would direct the member to executive council, which is just down the hall. And he'd be happy to have the discussion there, but it's outside the scope for our discussions this afternoon.

Mr. Maloway: I believe that our critic will take over now, and we will be proceeding to the resolutions.

Mr. Allum: Although we have many, many, many, many more issues to explore with my friend, the Finance Minister, I think we'll end our questioning and move on.

Mr. Chairperson: RESOLVED that there will be granted to Her Majesty a sum of not exceeding \$32,830,000 for Finance—[*interjection*]

Sorry about that, I'll re-read this again.

RESOLVED that there will be granted her—to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,832,000—oh, \$83,000. [*interjection*] Okay. Sorry, okay, again, we'll start all over.

Resolution 7.2: RESOLVED that there will be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$32,083,000 in Finance, Fiscal and Financial Management, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.3: RESOLVED that there will be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,692,000 for Finance, Treasury Board Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.4: RESOLVED that there would be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$1,625,000 for Finance, Priorities and Planning, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$147,479,000 for Finance, Central Services, for fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$69,280,000 for Finance, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Order.

Resolution 7.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,885,000 for Finance, Net Tax Credit Payments, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 7.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$61,525,000 for Finance, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates for the department is item 7.1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 7.1.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Chair, we did some research, and what we found is that when you raise the minimum wage by 50 cents it's a 4.5 per cent increase—pretty small in comparison to a 39 per cent raise. The last time the Premier (Mr. Pallister) sat in Cabinet he froze the minimum wage seven times.

Just a few weeks ago the Premier and his Cabinet gave themselves a significant salary increase, but refused to commit to raising the minimum wage for those who need it most.

At the very least, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his Cabinet should hold the line on their salaries and take a reduction until they keep their promise of presenting a budget without deficit.

So, in the spirit of ensuring that the voices of those who need it most are heard, I urge this Premier and his Cabinet to reconsider the wage they gave

themselves while supporting—while working to cut funds from the services families rely in and support the families who need the most.

Therefore, I move that line item 7.1.(a)(1)–

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Allum: –Minister of Finance's salary be reduced to \$37,000.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum)–

I move that the line item 7.1.(a)(i), Minister of Finance's Salary, be reduced to \$37,000. The motion is in order.

Is there any questions? Are we ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it member for the committee to adopt the 'mession'?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I believe the Ayes have it.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All in favour, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those who's opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: I believe the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: Recorded vote.

Mr. Chairperson: Reported by vote—recorded vote.

The vote has been requested. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.

* (16:20)

In the section of Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber considering the Estimates for the Department of Finance, the honourable member

for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) moved the following motion: that line item 7.1.(a)(1), Minister of Finance's salary, be reduced to 37,000.

The motion was defeated on a voice vote. Subsequently, two members requested a formal vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member of Fort Garry-Riverview.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 16, Nays 33.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The sections of Committee of Supply will now continue with consideration for the department of Estimates.

We have one more resolution to pass, resolution 7. Order.

Resolution 7.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,305,000 for Finance, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimate of Department of Finance, including Crown Services.

The next set of Estimates will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply in the Department of Infrastructure.

Shall we briefly recess and allow the minister and the critics to—for the opportunity to prepare for the commencement for the next department? *[Agreed]*

We will recess.

The committee recessed at 4:33 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:36 p.m.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

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

Does the honourable minister have any opening statements?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Yes.

Manitoba infrastructure builds community connections and ensures vital road, air, water and short-rail transportation corridors are accessible. We are responsible for transportation infrastructure and services including policy and legislation development; motor carrier regulation and enforcement; water control structures and hydrological forecasting; highway construction, maintenance and operation; air ambulance and water bomber operations; Crown Lands stewardship and emergency measures and public safety.

Our government's commitment to Manitobans is to become the most improved province in the country on a number of fronts: as they relate more closely with infrastructure, most improved province in job creation, most improved province in partnership initiatives with businesses and communities.

As Minister of Infrastructure, I am focused on making good on items clearly laid out to—for me in my mandate letter from our Premier (Mr. Pallister), which is No. 1, an investment of no less than a billion dollars per year in strategic infrastructure with the goal of supporting economic growth in Manitoba; No. 2, guaranteed and predictable funding to enable better planning of local levels and provide a measurable return on investment; No. 3 is build the flood protection necessary to keep Manitobans and their communities safe, beginning with a long overdue outlet needed to alleviate flooding around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

Also in that letter, as Minister of Infrastructure, I will work to open up government tendering by eliminating the old, forced unionization approach by ending project labour agreements. We will introduce project evaluation based on strategic return on investment, and I'm sure, as you're aware, we will also work to integrate the East Side Road Authority project into the department. That work is already well under way.

Manitoba's infrastructure efforts are now focused on building a stronger economy. Manitoba Infrastructure will focus its efforts on roads, bridges and flood protection, totalling \$741 million as part of the overall government-wide commitment to spend \$1.8 billion on strategic infrastructure. Job creation will go hand in hand with new projects that are

fiscally responsible and meet the test of measurable return on investment.

And Manitoba Infrastructure will review practices and policies to ensure partnership initiatives are aligned to business and communities, needs are identified for the infrastructure requirements by these partners and our relationships with our partners will be strengthened. We are going to change how we work with others based on true consultation with our partners and needs. We will build positive collaborative relationships to foster growth and create economic opportunity, which in turn leads to stronger communities.

Reliable transportation infrastructure makes the Manitoba market available for trade and service exchange. With the right infrastructure investments, we will also open opportunities for tourist development. Supporting this, we commit to a review of government tendering practices. We will be fair and transparent by reducing untendered contracts.

We also remain committed to early tendering to allow contractors to bid on work throughout the winter. This approach is favoured by industry and it will allow contractors to plan better, hire, train and retain workers and provide the best value for the taxpayers.

Disasters happen. Our neighbours in Fort McMurray are keenly aware of how suddenly people and their communities can be devastated. The newly named Emergency Management and Public Safety Division of MI is focused on improving emergency response in municipalities.

*(16:40)

We are also helping municipalities improve their own response capacity. We will provide enhanced training and work together with local authorities on community preparedness. We're working to increase the response capabilities of the provincial government to disruptions, major emergencies and disasters through the provincial Business Continuity Planning program, and by developing an improved crisis action co-ordination plan.

The Business Continuity Program will ensure all departments have plans in place to ensure their services are restored as soon as possible when a disruption occurs so Manitobans can continue to receive uninterrupted access to key programs and services they rely on. Manitobans expect their government to lead the way during a major emergency or disaster, and this plan will help ensure

the decision makers have the necessary tools to make informed decisions during a crisis.

Government will be there for Manitobans when they need it most. We will stand shoulder to shoulder with communities and families. We will deal effectively with disasters and ensure better support for faster recovery.

People in communities need to know that they can return to normal as quickly as possible should disaster strike. We will implement a number of programs to provide assistance to municipalities and landowners to build, and—or upgrade permanent flood mitigation projects such as the Community Flood Protection Program, which assists municipalities with construction of new flood protection dikes for vulnerable communities. Examples of these projects are communities of Moosehorn and Arborg, the Emergency to Permanent Program, which—E to P assists communities to convert temporary emergency dikes into permanent flood protection dikes. The Individual Flood Protection Initiative, which assists landowners to construct permanent flood protection for their homes and businesses and the financial assistance for cottagers program, which assists cottage owners to construct permanent flood protection.

These programs have been targeted to areas recently affected by flooding, including Lake Manitoba and Dauphin Lake. These multi-year programs are included in the 2016-17 budget, and there's also federal and municipal cost-sharing for some of the projects delivered on these programs.

We will shore up flood control infrastructure by providing new investment to protect Manitobans. Before you can grow, you need to feel secure; only then can a community grow and prosper.

Investments in new and upgraded infrastructure are often large expenditures, and deciding what to build, where to build and how large to build must be informed by detailed technical and economic analysis. Always informed by true partnership with municipalities and indigenous people—a top priority is to build the flood protection necessary to keep Manitobans, and their communities, safe, beginning with the outlet needed to alleviate flooding around Lake Manitoba.

The government—this government promises to find efficiencies. One of the first is the integration of the East Side Road Authority into Manitoba Infrastructure. Manitoba Infrastructure is also

currently consulting with key stakeholders in other levels of government to move ahead on the Shoal Lake 40 road. Manitoba Infrastructure has a dedicated and professional workforce that works constructively and co-operatively with citizens and stakeholders. We are committed to providing a Fair Say approach on infrastructure projects in collaboration municipal governments across the province. A new study will make recommendations to identify intelligent transportation system, applicable technologies and how to deploy the best strategies on Manitoba's National Highway System routes.

ITS involves the application of advanced and emerging technologies in transportation to save lives, time, money, energy and the environment, and the department is currently leading a study to develop an ITS deployment plan for our National Highway System routes. The study includes a public consultation component that is now under way.

All of these previous mentioned initiatives will ensure significant transportation assets are being managed as efficiently as possible to promote trade. They will also efficiently optimize road-user safety routes based on a priority basis. We will work with businesses and all levels of government to cost-share projects to—that ensure the best value for all Manitobans.

Manitoba Infrastructure will help build a better, stronger and more prosperous Manitoba. We are focused on demonstrating value with measurable results.

Now, Mr. Chair, finally, during this time of transition, I would like to thank the staff of MI for their help and guidance. This is a large department, and the dedication of all the staff is the first thing I noticed and very much appreciate when I took on this position. It gives me the confidence we will build bridges to a stronger economy and a better Manitoba, and achieve our common goal as the most improved province in Canada.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We want to thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening set comments?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to congratulate the member for his—well, first of all, his election, but also his appointment to the Cabinet position. And, yes, we do have a lot of questions for

him. We're limited, somewhat, by time, as he can appreciate, with only 100 hours of Estimates.

I have critics with me today who need—want to ask questions, so I'm going to have—the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) will be making the first few questions, and then we've got the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey), as well.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We want to thank the critic from the opposition—official opposition for those remarks.

Under the Manitoba practice, the debate for the ministerial salary is the last item considered for the department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration for line item 15.1.(a), contained in resolution 15.1.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

I'll ask the minister to introduce the staff in attendance, please.

Mr. Pedersen: I will introduce the staff, here.

I have Deputy Minister Lance Vigfusson; I have Assistant Deputy Minister Doug McMahon; Assistant Deputy Minister Ron Weatherburn; and Assistant Deputy Minister Leigh Anne Solmundson Lumbard.

And, if I may further, Mr. Chair, there—apparently there was an omission within the Estimates sheet. If I could table three copies of those, now, so that the critic can see this—a small addition but, nonetheless, it was—apparently it was missed. So our apologies for missing it, but it's in there now.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Minister. We'll pass that on to the critic.

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

Global? Okay, we'll proceed with a global. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Thank you, and it's agreed that, when the questioning for the department will be—proceeded in a global manner, with all the resolutions to be passed once questioning is concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I thank the minister for taking the time to answer some questions today. And, of course, the staff. And it's great to see some

staff back that'll be—I know—very familiar with some of the projects that I'm sure the minister will be asked about.

Just wanted to get an update on the Highway 59-PTH 101 Interchange project. Just get a sense of the progress of the project. Find out if that project is, in fact, on time in terms of the timeline that was set out when the project was first proposed.

*(16:50)

Mr. Pedersen: Thank the member for the question. It—one of the things about those—it's probably one of those most announced but yet most delayed projects that was ever going around. I lost track of the number of announcements that it was going to happen, but it was good to see that, now, that it is happening.

As the member's well aware, it started last fall. To date, it has been going—construction's been running smoothly, and it is on time and on budget as of right now. Project completion is expected to be later fall of 2018. Of course, we're two and a half year—two years and some way from there, so it will depend weather and what not on that. But there's not expected to be any—no foreseen problems right now, and we expect it to continue to proceed.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the minister may want to comment on the number of times it was announced, but, as he pointed out, it is under construction. And I think that's the key point there.

This is, you know, an important project for the northeast quadrant and, in fact, it's no small project. And, you know, this is full credit to the hard work that was done to, you know, make sure that this project got the attention that it needed, that we got the—what I like to call the Cadillac package of interchanges. This is—will be a first-class interchange for, you know, not only the residents of northeast Winnipeg, who use that intersection to get to their homes and to cottage country and beyond but, of course, to our important trucking industry in the province who use Highway 59 to transport goods north and, also, PTH 101 around the city.

Just wanted to ask if there were—if the minister knows if there were any changes to the project recently, any modifications to the initial design and, more specifically, I'm asking about the active transportation component and the link of the Northeast Pioneers Greenway out to the town of Birds Hill.

Mr. Pedersen: In regards to the through-pass, I believe is what it is called, it is—remains as a through-pass for emergency vehicles only. And the active transportation pedestrian-cyclist corridor is part of that through-pass. So it will—it's part of the design, it will be—it's being built as part of the construction project and as what was designed originally, and it will still be there.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I'm certainly glad to hear that, and the—as the minister may know, this project was pretty unique in terms of infrastructure projects in Manitoba in the sense that the active transportation component, which was a bit of a tricky engineering feat to understand exactly the best way to accomplish that connection, that important active transportation connection, was included in the design right from the very beginning of the design of the project. So—and I know that in terms of, you know, designing and building the project, this was understood to be an important component of it.

And, again, so this is something that's unique in Manitoba, and it's something that I think most people see a lot of value in. Active transportation is a—you know, is an important component of infrastructure within the city, and as we start to think about ways we can incorporate it into larger projects outside of the city, I think it's an important direction to take.

I guess my question is just to clarify—and I appreciate the minister's been so forthright in answering that—that that was part of the project and continues to be a part of the project. I guess my concern is is that, you know, there have been political pressures from certain groups to, you know, to sort of see that as a separate piece of the project, to parcel off the active transportation as a separate component to the project.

I also—and maybe the minister can comment on this briefly before we're out of time here today, but I do understand that the active transportation component of the project will be one of the last components that will be built and opened. So I'm just concerned that this project would, at some point in the future, that the direction the minister's giving now would change and, you know, because of factors outside of this place, maybe we could say—or opinions from outside of our good people at Manitoba Infrastructure, would decide that this, in fact, shouldn't be a part of the project, and that could be cancelled.

So my question is twofold. One, is it possible or is there any possibility, I guess, that the active

transportation component could still be stopped or detached from the larger project, and now I'm just forgetting my second question, but I did have a second question in there. So, if the minister remembers, he can answer that. Otherwise, that's the meat and potatoes of it.

Mr. Pedersen: I thank the member for that question. And just so the member is clear, the tender has been put out—or the tender is—was awarded. The construction is happening right now. And the tender and the award of the contract was based on an emergency through pass—I hope I'm using the correct term, a through pass—for emergency vehicles, including—

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, sorry. Go ahead. Sorry.

Mr. Pedersen: —an active transportation pass through there. So that is what is being—that's the way it was tendered. That's the way it's being built. And we will continue. The contractor is working on that every day, and we hope to see that project done on time and on budget.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

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