

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

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

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Kjartan Johnson

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli): I rise today to offer my condolences to the Johnson family and all of those who knew this great man who contributed so much to the community over 95 years.

Mr. Kjartan Johnson passed away on May 18th, 2016. He is survived by his loving wife of 65 years, Valdina Johnson, his four children, June, Joan, Maguet and Carolin, who is with us in the gallery today, along with their spouses, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

His journey begins out of school on the family farm for several years. Finding his true passion in retail, he set off on an adventure and in 1953 he opened the Johnson and Sons Arborg Ltd. store. Over the years, being well known and respected for a driven and focused work ethic, he also gave many young Manitobans their job in the community, breeding a generation of hard-working and caring people. If you couldn't find it in the Johnson and Sons, you couldn't find it anywhere.

That isn't just in business, Madam Speaker. We are talking about a warm-hearted, altruistic man, a man who taught many great lessons over the years and one that will continue to touch the hearts of those who knew him and those who are lucky to meet the individuals bettered by him.

His legacy continued in the new community of Gimli. Here, in 1991, his children continued his service over the years and opened Johnson's in Gimli, a staple in the town where he was seen daily conversing with customers, picking up and pricing stock or, as all my constituents can attest to, maintaining the cleanest and safest sidewalk in Gimli during the winter months.

Madam Speaker, I invite all the members to take a moment and recognize a great Manitoban. His legacy lives on. Sir, you will not be forgotten and your memories will be cherished for many years to come. May you rest in peace.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Marileen Bartlett

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, Marileen Bartlett is a Metis woman, a community leader and an entrepreneur who has dedicated more than 30 years of her life to helping Aboriginal people get training and employment. Marileen gave me my first job, and so it fills me with great joy to be able to stand here today and honour her for receiving the Order of Manitoba.

Marileen is the executive director of the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development, CAHRD and the Neeginan centre. It's Marileen's boundless energy as well as her compassion and sense of justice that makes her a perfect candidate for the order. Marileen is a firm believer that fair and equal access to education and training are essential to fair and equal indigenous participation in the economy.

CAHRD's mission is to relieve and prevent unemployment among Aboriginal people in Winnipeg. They provide education and training, employment services and valuable support programs like counselling, housing and daycare. It's a holistic approach that doesn't just look at problems, but the complete person.

Madam Speaker, the Order of Manitoba is the highest honour our province can give. It recognizes people who have demonstrated excellence and achievement in their field. First and foremost, it recognizes people like Marileen whose service has provided an unquestionable benefit to Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, it's people like Marileen who are making Manitoba better. She helped Aboriginal people strive for a better future, better economic prosperity and independence.

Thank you, Marileen, for all your—all of the work you've done and the help you have—gave me to where I am today. Congratulations on receiving the Order of Manitoba. I can't think of anyone who deserves it more.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thompson Aboriginal Accord

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Tansi. Good afternoon, everyone, and I hope you had a happy Aboriginal Day yesterday.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are on Treaty 1 territory, and yesterday I was on Treaty 5 territory in Thompson. I was very pleased to represent the government of Manitoba as we became a partner in the Thompson Aboriginal Accord. Our government believes it is important to be a part of this accord, which recognizes the role of Aboriginal people in the North and commits to strengthening relationships with indigenous people throughout the province.

By becoming a partner in the Thompson accord, our government is demonstrating our commitment to the recommendations outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. It's also an important step in our government's Yes! North initiative to enhance the social and economic well-being of our northern communities. But, more importantly, it's the right thing to do.

I'm honoured to speak in the House today, and I'm honoured to have been a part of that historic day in Thompson for all of the people of Manitoba, and I'm confident that our community will demonstrate how an effective and respectful relationship and partnership like the Thompson Aboriginal Accord can benefit everyone.

The Thompson Aboriginal Accord was first established in the city of Thompson in June 21st, 2009, and I encourage all members to look it up online.

I also want to thank the organizers of the Aboriginal Day celebrations in Thompson and around the province and around the country for all their hard work.

Ekosi. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mega Bug March

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): This past Saturday, I was very pleased to join Art City founder Wanda Koop, local City Councillor Jenny Gerbasi, my own daughter Molly and others as we celebrated Art City's annual parade through the West Broadway neighbourhood.

This year's theme was the Mega Bug March. Now, bear with me. It started with a very simple idea: What if a well-meaning, if slightly mad scientist, wanted to create an enlarging ray to provide more food for the world and it went horribly wrong and enlarged all the bugs instead? That's what paraded through the streets of West Broadway.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, the kids at Art City and the guest artist from Winnipeg, Kenneth Lavallee, spent a month working on their costumes as they learned about entomology and gained a new perspective on our relationship with nature. Together, they created a marching army of ants, butterflies, a swarm of bees and many, many more floats and costumes using papier mâché and the power of their imaginations.

The quality of the parade was quite remarkable, as we ran the—walked the entire route. The parade champion was created by Elaine and Neil Margolis. It was a giant queen bee complete with a royal throne. In true Manitoba style, there was, of course, a giant Slurpee float circled, as it was, by a number of wasps, a 20-foot long canker worm, and it wouldn't be Manitoba without mosquitos in the parade, but one of the floats, thankfully, was a giant can of bug spray.

Based on the generosity of Manitobans, this incredible opportunity was made available to all, even those who couldn't afford to make their own costumes. We all had a wonderful time afterwards at the barbecue at Art City, enjoying great local music and entertainment. And I just want to spend a moment to send a special shout out to all the staff and volunteers at Art City for creating yet another very memorable few hours in the amazing West Broadway neighbourhood.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Dauphin's Countryfest

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, what initially started as a small country music festival to help sustain the historic Ukrainian Folk Arts Centre and Museum site, Dauphin's Countryfest has grown to become one of Canada's largest country

music festivals that would change the landscape of the community.

Engineered in 1990 and incorporated in 1991 as a not-for-profit organization, Dauphin's Countryfest has experienced tremendous growth and success in its lifetime. The event hosts approximately 14,000 attendees per day, has over 4,000 camp sites while currently having an economic impact of \$10 million to the region.

Madam Speaker, hosting the event is made successful with the help of over 2,000 amazing volunteers which, in turn, helps community groups and service clubs earn over \$150,000 annually. In addition, the festival has provided grants of over \$1 million to community projects, helped to build a pool and arena, a movie theatre and providing generous support to Dauphin's community foundation through the Neil Peterson Countryfest Post-Secondary Scholarship in Music Education.

Today, Dauphin's Countryfest maintains its status as Canada's longest running country music festival and this year will be hosting some of the country music's biggest stars, such as Dallas Smith, Dean Brody, Thomas Rhett and Lady Antebellum.

Madam Speaker, this not-for-profit music festival is different than any other. It was built by the community for the community. The success of Dauphin's Countryfest belongs to all of the volunteers who dedicate their time and energy, year after year, to putting this first-class event.

Thank you.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to revert to tabling of reports.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to revert to tabling of reports? *[Agreed]*

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I'm pleased to table the Supplementary Estimates for Legislative Review for 2016 for Enabling and Other Appropriations and Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: And 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 administrators for the Swan Valley School Division Cam Mateika, Kelly Riehl, Bill Schaffer,

Marilyn Markie-Forrester and Brent Rausche, who are the guests of the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Canada Pension Plan Reform Government Position

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Manitoba New Democrats are proud of our history in fighting for pensions. In government, we've played a key role on the national stage in working for CPP reform. Today our position is clear: We support the historic agreement reached to enhance the CPP.

The question Manitobans are asking today is twofold: What exactly is the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) position, and why is he so out of step with the vast majority of Manitobans and virtually every other provincial government?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Deputy Premier): Just before I respond to the member's question, I just want to offer my condolences to Councillor Morantz and his wife Lisa, their son Jeremy, on the loss of their son Nathan. This is a tragedy that has happened yesterday, and we offer our sincere condolences to the family.

With respect to the question that the member asked, we want to ensure that the CPP proposal is in the best interest of Manitobans. We have been out and spoken to—and the Minister of Finance has started to speak to Manitobans about this very issue. We will consult with Manitobans to make sure that this proposal is in the best interest of all Manitobans.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Manitobans are getting accustomed to the increasingly bizarre and personal nature of the Premier's approach to key issues.

Yesterday, he said that when they attended these historic meetings on CPP, they didn't assume that they would come out with an agreement. If that wasn't strange enough, he went on to lecture Canadians about the need to understand the management of their discretionary incomes, as if everyday Manitobans has the capacity to buy stocks, bonds, RSPs or even set up foreign corporations.

Why is the Premier (Mr. Pallister) sounding more like a Sun Life Financial agent than a premier of a province who should be a key advocate for pension reform?

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm glad that the member brings up discretionary spending and income to Manitobans.

Of course, we know that the members opposite made an election promise prior to the last election not to raise taxes. And the first opportunity that they had after being elected, they expanded the taxes that were—that on Manitobans, and then they increased the PST.

We know that they broke their promise doing that. That took away discretionary income for Manitobans, discretionary income that they needed, wanted and deserved.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The members opposite campaigned that they will not claw back the seniors' rebate—tax rebate.

Madam Speaker, there are two visions for pensions: the NDP, which has always fought for universal public pension plan, and the Premier and—who clearly wants further privatization of pensions.

The Premier can't expect anyone to believe his excuses for not fully revealing his position. The issue of CPP reform has been debated for many years, and serious discussions have been under way since—for at least five years.

Why won't the Premier admit that his real agenda is to try to undercut public pension improvement and instead push his vision of an increasingly privatized pension system?

Mrs. Stefanson: We're a newly elected government. We want to ensure that this CPP proposal is in the best interest of Manitobans.

We've only been in office for about seven weeks, Madam Speaker, and it's time that we explore various opportunities for Manitobans. And we want to ensure that we consult with Manitobans to make sure that this is in the best interest of all Manitobans.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier clearly doesn't get it.

Relying on private pension plans is not working for many Canadians. Eleven million Canadians have

no workplace pension. In 2011, about 25 per cent of private sector employees were in some kind of registered pension plan, compared with 44 per cent in 1984.

Manitobans and Canadians want a universal pension system. The CPP agreement is the first major enhancement since 1965.

Why is the Premier putting his own personal agenda ahead of being part of a historic enhancement to our public pension system?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I thank you, Madam Speaker, and—for this opportunity to answer the question.

* (13:50)

Now, members on the other side are getting a number of things wrong. But, first of all, it's important to state that retirement affordability really does count. It's very important, just as affordability in households counts now for Manitobans.

Now, yesterday, statements put on the record by NDP members belie a failure to grasp fundamental parts of the CPP. There seems to be—they seem to be demonstrating the need for financial literacy. And we will endeavour to help them to understand how it is that CPP is one part of what was always designed to be a multi-faceted approach to retirement. It's important that we get this right.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, let's understand this is a critical issue for low- and middle-income Canadians. CPP supports, at current levels, put us in the bottom 10 amongst OECD countries.

Why won't the Premier get on board with this historic enhancement of our public pension plan?

Mr. Friesen: The interim leader doesn't seem to recognize that right now low-income Manitobans are well served by the CPP.

But also members there don't understand, when the member from Wolseley states on the record that somehow a low-income earner of \$13,000 would receive \$4,000 more, he's completely inaccurate. He does not understand that even at the highest level of contribution, only that highest contribution would derive an additional \$4,000.

There is an importance to get this right. But these statements belie the need to educate on this

issue and insist also on financial literacy, which was one of the intents of the Finance ministers' meeting.

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

Ms. Marcelino: This is an issue for all Canadians, but it is particularly important to young people.

Millennials today often face precarious work with two-tiered wages and pension benefits that mean they will never have the wages and benefits that others have had. They need the public pension plan to be there for them in the future.

Why won't the Premier (Mr. Pallister) support this historic–historic–reform to the CPP that is a commitment to the future millennials and future generations of Canadians?

Mr. Friesen: So many inaccuracies.

Madam Speaker, first of all, seniors do not derive a benefit from the decisions undertaken in Vancouver. This does not affect them. This is for the next generation.

When it comes to millennials, the member understands that in no jurisdiction have millennials been faced with so much deterioration in their income.

But coming back to the member from Wolseley's point about an expanding gun and an expanding ray, no other government set the sights of their expanding ray so much on tax of Manitobans, causing it to go up to this extent now where Manitobans are paying thousands of dollars each year more, money that cannot go towards retirement income.

Canada Pension Plan Reform Government Position

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Let's remember this is a government that has refused to raise the minimum wage. It's added new taxes on seniors and now flatly refuses to join a broad national consensus on enhancing the CPP. The Minister of Finance is quickly becoming the minister of inequality in this province.

And yet yesterday, Madam Speaker, the Finance Minister admitted in Estimates that the CPP proposal on the table is modest, it's incremental and it's fully funded.

Madam Speaker, what's his problem?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I welcome the discussion about affordability in retirement and affordability right now in households.

The members have to acknowledge that in no jurisdiction in Canada have income earners had their ability to save and their ability to pay bills so deteriorated as in Manitoba over the last 17 years under the NDP. The average family in Manitoba pays almost \$4,000 more than the same family living in Saskatchewan, just to live. This erodes the ability of Manitobans to save adequately for their retirement.

The member makes our point. It's important to get this right.

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

Mr. Allum: Madam Speaker, eight provinces of this country already think we got it right. Why does this Finance Minister think he knows better?

Maybe the problem here, Madam Speaker, is that the finance—while the Finance Minister agrees that this is a modest and affordable plan, the Premier feels that it compromises his own personal business interests.

So why won't the Finance Minister stand up for Manitobans, stand up to his Premier and support this plan right now?

Mr. Friesen: This member doesn't seem to miss an opportunity to divide, but that is not our approach, Madam Speaker. Our approach is to take the time to get it right.

Now, when the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) called across the aisle yesterday and says that you've got government money on the table that this party is not choosing to take, it shows that he does not understand that the system of CPP is based on contributions made, employer-employee held, and then paid out in retirement. There's a fundamental lack of ability to grasp the way CPP works. And all of a sudden, now they're espousing a new view that they have today that they've never articulated before.

There's an importance to get this right. That's our commitment to all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Allum: Madam Speaker, the only one dividing this province and this country is the Minister of

Finance and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of Manitoba who won't sign on to a good deal for Manitobans and Canadians.

And the reason for that is that this government is quickly following in the footsteps of Stephen Harper. The former prime minister's only plan for reforming pensions in this country was to raise the retirement age to 67. It's the real reason why this Premier won't support the CPP agreement is that he's never been in favour of pensions.

He isn't now and he never, ever will be.

Mr. Friesen: I welcome the opportunity to address head-on some assertions that are being put on the record that are simply not accurate and could be dangerous: (1) CPP proposals, or the enhancement right now, does not have any effect on seniors who are already in retirement; (2) the fully phased-in amount would only take effect in 2025, not right now. But in addition to this, I would stress, as well, that affordability matters.

And if that party had cared about the ability for Manitobans to save for retirement, they would not have hiked the PST to 8 per cent, a measure that now has taken in \$1 billion of household earnings and income from Manitobans.

Canada Pension Plan Reform Low- and Middle-Income Women

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): This government's failure to support the expansion of the CPP is yet another decision in a string of actions resulting in the economic marginalization of Manitoba women.

Young women in Manitoba are moving into careers in the private sector, are struggling to stretch out their budget, to have a family and to save for retirement at the same time. With public sector pensions in decline, middle-income women are relying on the CPP to provide a floor for retirement savings.

The majority of provinces agree the only way to ensure retirement security for women and eliminate the pay gap between men and women is by expanding the CPP.

Will the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. Squires) acknowledge that her government's position—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I didn't hear a question there at the end that got completed, Madam Speaker, but what I think I heard was about the importance for all of—all Manitobans to have the same opportunity to save adequately in retirement, and for all Manitobans to be treated fairly by government when it comes to the ability to develop revenues and assets. And, on that point, I insist that we have broad-based agreement. How we get there really matters.

* (14:00)

It matters for this province. It matters for those families who have a lot of stresses in their household trying to pay bills, trying to, you know, enrol children in sports, trying to get ahead, paying the mortgage. These are all the considerations that we have heard from Manitobans. It's important to get it right.

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

Child-Care Spaces Funding Concerns

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): This government has no strategy to address the growing need for more child-care spaces. What they have offered is a refusal in—for investment in public centre-based child care and doubling the child-care fees. This is eerily similar to the last time the Conservatives were in power when there were 4,566 spaces unfunded and \$8 million in cuts.

Will the Minister responsible for the Status of Women admit that this government's decision to ignore public child care puts young Manitoba women at financial disadvantage and harms Manitoba families?

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

I can tell you that we as a government want to ensure that child care is an important issue; it's an important issue for everything. Making sure life is affordable for a whole bunch of different areas is something that we are very much supportive of. We obviously know the vital role that child care plays in this, and that's why we have a plan. We have a plan that we think will provide better access and better care for our children, opposed to what we saw with the NDP government where you have over 12,000 kids waiting on a child-care list.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Investment in Women
Government Policies**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm not sure if I need to table that it's actually 2016 and women are actually encouraged to speak on their behalf.

So, again, I'm going to ask the Minister responsible for Status of Women if she will admit that this government has failed to bring in policies and make strategic investments that will empower and strengthen everyday women to fully participate in our economy.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to take this question. I thank the member for St. Johns for this question.

Empowering women is a very key priority for this government, such a strong key priority for this government that within six weeks of my mandate I made time to meet with the Women's Advisory Council. We met to discuss important issues to advance women's rights in this province.

After two and a half years for the previous administration, the previous minister responsible for Status of Women failed to meet with this group. Where they failed, we'll get it right.

**City of Winnipeg
Water Pollution Control**

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I'm wondering if the minister might be able to inform the House on the topic of sewage in the city of Winnipeg, phosphorus and nitrogen.

How many times has the CEC, the Clean Environment Commission, been asked for its opinion on this issue already and what did they say each time?

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

Of course, our water supply, our lakes, our rivers are of the utmost importance to us, and we do want to make sure that we are able to reduce the amount of nutrients going into those bodies of water. We are working with the City of Winnipeg and we'll continue to do that to ensure that the—we preserve the safety of our lakes.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, Madam Speaker, the minister was more forthcoming with the CBC than she just was with Manitobans right now. She is directly quoted as saying they're opening the door for the City of Winnipeg to not need to remove nitrogen from their sewage.

I will ask her if she has new science available; she says she's in favour of following scientific advice. If she has new science available, I invite her to table it today. If she doesn't have that, is she referring this issue to the CEC a third time? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sustainable Development.

Mrs. Cox: A little eager.

Anyways, as we know, as you know and all of us in the House know, we are committed to the environment, and we are committed to ensuring that our lakes and waters and streams are clean and protected and we will continue to do that as we move forward as this government. We will do that to protect Manitobans' waters.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, that was a completely vapid answer, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the corner that the minister has been put in, because quite clearly you cannot entertain the idea of allowing more pollution to go into the waterways and also claim to be defending the environment. She has quite clearly been given direction from someone else in her government.

I want to ask the Finance Minister: How much is he trying to cut from the provincial share of this project of the City of Winnipeg by limiting the pollution control measures on the table?

Mrs. Cox: Thank you for that question.

The city of Winnipeg water supply system was built many years ago, and I think that we're going to work with them to ensure that we do reduce those nutrients. We have said that clearly and we will make sure that we protect Manitoba's waters into the future. Thank you.

**Children in Care
Child Tax Benefit**

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): It gives me great honour to introduce everyone here to one of Winnipeg's most celebrated humanitarians, Althea Guiboche, who is present in our gallery, lovingly known as the Bannock Lady. Althea works tirelessly to feed Winnipeg's homeless community. The 2015 Winnipeg census indicates that three fourths of homeless respondents identified as indigenous, and of those over half have been in foster care or in group homes. I had previously asked if trust funds for aging-out CFS children would be reinstated.

My question to the Minister of Families: Will this new government correct the course—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

As before, in terms of what the answer to the question is, we're obviously committed to protecting children as best we can in the system. We know that's not happening right now. We want to ensure that people have the supports that are in place, and that's why we've enhanced our budget in a whole number of ways in terms of the Department of Families, in terms of—you look at housing. We've increased it by over \$45 million for CYS, children and family services over \$20 million that are part of that.

We've also taken steps in terms of reducing tax loads and having people with the lowest income reduced from the basic personal exemption into—in the tune of 2,770 people.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Klassen: I still didn't hear an answer.

I had the privilege of watching Althea in action this weekend. Twenty-six children from Skownan First Nation left their home reserve at 7 a.m. and drove the four hours here by bus, went to buy food and water from funds they had raised themselves, and then proceeded to feed the people that had lined up: true humanity in action from our children.

Many of the people who are homeless have been in CFS care. It is very important that the money in the trust funds be returned to these children to help

How much money was taken and when will it be returned to the children in CFS care for when they turn 18?

Mr. Fielding: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Again, we are absolutely committed to working with families. We know that there's way too many kids that are part of the child-welfare system; that's a part of it. There's a whole bunch of new programs and services that we're talking about that we think will make a difference in this. We also talked about the needs for things in terms of the basic personal exemption where you have people of the lowest income Manitobans that would be taken off the tax rolls altogether.

We also think about the child-welfare system incorporating indigenous learnings is a good part of that and we do want to work with indigenous leadership. In fact, there's a symposium happening called imagining child welfare in the spirit of reconciliation that our department is having to work with everyone to ensure that the process is in place in terms of learning.

Thank you.

*(14:10)

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

Ms. Klassen: I want us to be mindful while we're all enjoying the beautiful, warm weather, the most grateful are those homeless because they don't have to fear the freezing cold temperatures. The minister should be clear today in addressing this issue. This is a vital step in addressing the homelessness situation in Manitoba.

My question to the minister is: Why is this government not committing to act today to return the money taken from the children?

Mr. Fielding: I do appreciate the question, and, once again, we think that this budget, 2016 budget, makes the right investments for people—the most vulnerable children in our society. In terms of the appropriations for our actual department, there is upwards of \$175 million additional money that has been appropriated to people in need. We think that's extremely important.

We also know the federal government is changing the child tax benefit; that's a part of it. We want to work with the federal government. In fact,

there's obviously some changes with the Human Rights Tribunal that looks at the appropriations of people on reserve versus off reserve, and we want to be a part of that conversation and dialogue moving forward.

Indigenous Community Investments Government Collaboration

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): As I said earlier, it was my pleasure to declare a partnership with the Thompson Aboriginal Accord yesterday on behalf of our new government. This accord honours the ancestors' traditions and the spirit of the community, and we acknowledge a strong relationship between Aboriginal people and the city of Thompson.

Could the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations please inform the House of the steps our government is taking to work together with indigenous people in our province?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I'd like to thank the member for his question as well as his important work that he's done on this file on behalf of our team.

The signing of the Thompson Aboriginal Accord is one indication of our government's commitment to work with indigenous people of Manitoba. We will collaborate with the City of Thompson in working with the community to support and strengthen existing and emerging programs and services to improve the lives of its indigenous citizens of this community as well as the surrounding region.

We are also launching a new initiative called Yes! North. This initiative will be the forum that will work on promoting partnerships to attract new companies, assist entrepreneurs to foster quality jobs and a stronger northern economy—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Dissolution of the East Side Road Authority Northern Economic Development Concerns

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): During the election, this government said they would take \$8 million by eliminating the East Side Road Authority. As we know, the east-side road project was more than building roads between northern communities, but guaranteeing those communities could share in the economic benefits. The East Side Road Authority would provide good jobs, training and encourage community enterprise.

These economic benefits would be key to improving the lives of indigenous northern Manitobans. Will this government use the \$8 million cut from the East Side Road Authority to fund programs and initiatives to grow these northern economies?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I thank the member for that question.

The East Side Road Authority has—is in the process of being wound down right now, being absorbed back into the Infrastructure Ministry where it should have been all along, rather than creating bureaucracies. That—minister—the Ministry of Infrastructure is the one who builds the roads. They will continue to work on that in—the both in the east side and all through Manitoba, because it's about building roads, not about building bureaucracies.

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

Ms. Lathlin: The Minister of Infrastructure has repeatedly refused to make any commitment to maintaining the many initiatives that had been under way in northern Manitoba as part of the NDP's historic infrastructure investments. He has refused to say whether he will deliver on commitments to upgrade northern roads outside of the east-side area like the highway to Moose Lake or Nelson House. These road improvements will eliminate dangerous conditions for indigenous communities and open accessibility to health care, training opportunities and education.

Will the Minister of Infrastructure use the \$8 million cut from the ESRA to make much-needed investment in these northern roads and improve the lives of indigenous northern communities?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, I'm glad that the member brings up the discussion of historic in terms of infrastructure, because it's that previous government that cut the maintenance budget that did a—[interjection] Sorry. I'm trying to describe it kindly, where they—it was a complete drought in Infrastructure budget until the year of the election, and then they ramp it up with promises throughout the—all out the province—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: —\$600 million worth of promises that they had no intention of following through on.

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

Ms. Lathlin: As part of the East Side Road Authority's contract tendering process, contractors would hire 50 per cent of their workers from the east-side communities. These workers would benefit from the training and be able to transfer these skills over to other projects and share their knowledge within the community.

The east-side project was about creating more skilled workers in their communities who could expand education opportunities for the next generation of workers. It was about providing hope and opportunity for our young people.

Will this government use the \$8 million cut from East Side Road Authority to fund education opportunities in the North like the University College of the North?

Mr. Pedersen: A few of the facts that the member put on the record are just not true, but I'll leave that for Estimates because I'm sure they will be coming forward with more questions on there.

The East Side Road Authority was about building bureaucracy, not about building roads. This government is back on the path of building relationships with the east-side road community—or with the east-side communities, and we will continue to build those relationships, which includes employment, which will be further road building in—on the east side.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Road Safety in Manitoba Government Responsibility

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Last Friday, I asked the Minister for Crown Services whether he was responsible for road safety in Manitoba, and he told me several times in his answers that he was no more responsible than you, Madam Speaker, or me or any other Manitoban. And that struck me as very strange because four days before that, in Justice Estimates, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) told me the Minister for Crown Services was responsible for road safety in Manitoba.

Has the Minister for Crown Services now had a chance to think things over? Can he confirm he's responsible for road safety in Manitoba, or is the Minister of Justice wrong?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

I would just caution all members that we do have an opportunity here for questions to be asked and answers to be given, and I would ask that respect be given to those that are asking and answering. I think that's important for the respect and decorum of this Chamber.

So, the honourable Minister of Crown Services.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Over the past 17 dark NDP years, members opposite, MLAs, NDP MLAs, went into the Crown corporations and took what they weren't deserving of. They took Jets tickets. They would politically interfere in the Crown corporations, Madam Speaker, like members opposite think that they're still entitled to, and, I'd like to say, even the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), who, today, went into Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries and felt that he had a right to interfere in the Crown corporation.

* (14:20)

Let me be perfectly clear that the 57 individual MLAs in this Chamber do not run the Crown corporations and should not be trying to politically interfere like the member for Tyndall Park did today.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, Madam Speaker, the minister and his colleagues may think that answer's good enough for question period.

That answer's not good enough for police officers that have to attend on the scene when somebody dies on the road or have to go to families and tell them that they've lost somebody in a road accident. It's not good enough for a group like Mothers Against Drunk Driving who call upon the government to bring in laws and policies to keep our roads safe.

Could this Minister for Crown Services please take this seriously, tell us whether he's responsible for road safety in Manitoba, or whether the Minister of Justice is wrong, or who on that side is actually taking this matter seriously?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, it is the responsibility of every Cabinet minister and of every MLA to take safety seriously, and we do that as a government.

And we take no lessons from the member opposite, who took his duties so seriously that he

went into the Crown corporations and, instead of talking about safety, talked about what Jets tickets he was entitled to.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, frankly, Madam Speaker, I've asked a very serious question on behalf of Manitobans.

The Minister for Crown Services should be ashamed of his answer, and should be ashamed of the fact that he can't even tell us whether he, or any other minister of the Crown, is actually going to take responsibility for road safety in Manitoba.

You know, when good people like Melody or Wayne Bodnarchuk from MADD Winnipeg, who I've met with many times, come looking for help in getting better laws and better policies, I guess I'll tell them they're better off to meet with me or any member of our caucus than a Minister of Crown Services (Mr. Schuler) that can't be interested.

Can the minister come up with a better answer today?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Certainly, I know that the member did pose this question in Estimates. It was—I'd have to go back and actually peruse Hansard as to what, specifically, the question was.

Certainly, Mothers Against Drunk Driving—as we take this very seriously—I will be meeting with them very shortly. There's very serious concerns and issues around that. We do take those issues of safety in the roadways very seriously. And I can assure all members of this House and all our—all members and citizens in our province that our government takes these issues of road safety very seriously.

Community Benefits Agreements Funding Commitment

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, the other day in Estimates, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) seemed to commit to living up to commitments for community benefit agreements that were already in place.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure tell the House: Is this government agreeing to live up to those commitments? And how much money are they spending this year?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Again, I'm looking forward to

Estimates this afternoon because I'm sure this discussion will happen there, as the member from Flin Flon was quizzing the Premier about it. And, as I was reading through Hansard, the Premier was suggesting to bring it to Infrastructure Estimates.

So here we are this afternoon. We'll fully review this.

Now, I can say that the community benefit agreements are part of the review that the department is doing on winding down the East Side Road Authority. And there's been no decision on any of this because what they've done is such a tangled mess and there—it's going to take us months to untangle this.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Bell's Purchase of MTS

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

And the background of the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Manitoba—the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many fine Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by C. Dowd, M. Singh, D. Johnson and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

Legislative Building—Gender Neutral Washroom

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by many fine Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Orders of the day, government business.

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Prior to calling orders of the day, we have a couple of requests.

Would you please canvass the House to see if there's leave to move the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission enabling—

Madam Speaker: Order. My mistake, I should have called grievances prior to orders of the day.

Are there any grievances?

There being none, the honourable Government House Leader.

Mr. Goertzen: I am seeking leave. Would you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to move to the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission, Enabling and Other Appropriations, Legislative Assembly and Employee Pensions and Other Costs, from room 254 permanently into room 255, and for the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission, Enabling and Other Appropriations, Legislative Assembly and Employee Pensions to be considered tomorrow morning from 10 a.m. until noon?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to move the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission, Enabling and Other Appropriations, Legislative Assembly and Employee Pensions and Other Costs, from room 255 permanently into room—from room 254 permanently into room 255, and for the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission, Enabling and Other Appropriations, Legislative Assembly and Employee Pensions to be considered tomorrow morning June 23rd from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the House, Madam Speaker.

Would you further canvass the House to see if there is leave to move the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture from the Chamber into room 254 permanently, effective today, and to set aside the Estimates of Executive Council tomorrow morning from 11 a.m. until 12, only on June 23rd, to be replaced with the Department of Agriculture?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to move the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture from the Chamber into room 254 permanently, effective today, and to set aside the Estimates of Executive Council tomorrow morning from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m., only on June 23rd, to be replaced with the Department of Agriculture? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

INDIGENOUS AND MUNICIPAL RELATIONS

* (14:40)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

For the information of all members, today we will be filming some footage for our video series Inside the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. Our camera operator will be working in this section of supply at some point this afternoon.

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): It's an absolute honour here to be participating in this process involving our government. Also, too, it's an absolute honour to be serving as the critic for indigenous and municipal affairs as well.

I had learned a little about the history of this role through my late father. I recognize some of our folks here that he has worked with in the past, as well, and I'm looking forward to learning and—especially with the Municipal Relations, department of indigenous affairs. I've had quite a hands-on experience with my nine years with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and also working with some of our land-claim agreements as well.

So—and also, I'm looking forward to establishing a working relationship, too, with our minister and her staff. So with that, that's my opening remarks.

So my first question would be, basically, we'll begin with administrative. I just wanted to just ask as to—when I first got the list of our new government, I was quite puzzled and concerned about the amalgamation, if you will, with indigenous—the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs just disappeared and it was amalgamated with indigenous and municipal affairs. And I just wanted to know, what was the concept, the discussions that had happened within your caucus to come to that decision?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): Well, I want to, first of all, have a couple of opening remarks, too, for my colleague with the opposition to government, and I'm happy to have this opportunity here with you today to learn about this process. It's a first time for me. It's my second session, but it's my first time doing Estimates. And I think it poses a really good learning experience for all of us, you know, about our departments, but also about the political process.

And I think, you know, having this opportunity and dialogue to answer different questions than perhaps what we get in question period, but more of a one-on-one, more of a dialogue, is a great opportunity for all those who are here just observing even. And I am grateful and I thank member from The Pas as well as the member that was here for Estimates in the previous session for their respectful manner in which they've done so. I think there's a great need for respect and consideration, and I appreciate that I've received that twice now, so thank you very much.

In regards to the amalgamation—would you call it—of two departments now to make one very large one, as you would understand, I was not part of that decision-making process that would put the two together. It was a decision through the transition team, I guess, that they would bring the Cabinet, the former Cabinet of 19 down to a new 12-member Cabinet. I was very honoured when I was asked to consider taking this position prior to swearing in.

I would have to say, you know, initially, when I heard Indigenous and Municipal Relations, it didn't resonate immediately, but then, on the other hand, I was a little bit overwhelmed with the fact of being asked to be a Cabinet member in this new government. It was enough to be elected, but let alone be a minister in a very prestigious position.

Of course, for being Municipal Relations seemed like an easy part, having eight years in municipal relations, four of those in an executive position with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. And like yourself with your background on the Aboriginal or indigenous side, I had what I considered a very good experience and a good working knowledge on the municipal side.

I did not have the same on the Indigenous Relations, but I was excited about having that opportunity. I've always been a person that accepts new challenge with optimism. And once we got into the working part of this new department within this government, I immediately asked my staff—I kind of had a potential list of leaders, I guess you would say, that I wanted to meet with, people that I knew within the province of Manitoba on the indigenous side that could offer insight to me, give me direction, perhaps give me past experiences, situations that had worked, situations that had gone wrong or disappointments, successes, whatever the case may be. I asked my staff to fill my calendar, literally, with as many of these requests for meetings.

I didn't want the indigenous communities or organizations to wait until there was a crisis, wait 'til there was a problem and then try and get a meeting with the new minister when it maybe wasn't a good time. I wanted to initiate those meetings and I did. And I knew after the—about the first or second week that this had been a positive thing to do. The people that I invited to come in were very pleased to have that opportunity.

Ms. Lathlin: For information purposes for my community, constituency, staff, could I be provided with a list of all political staff, including names, position and whether they're full-time or part-time or not, in the department?

Ms. Clarke: I thank you for your question in regards to the political staff.

At this time, I have two full-time political staff, those being Craig MacDonald, who is my special assistant, and I have Marsha Street, who is my executive assistant.

Ms. Lathlin: Again, for our purposes of working together, how many staff does the department have, and how is it divided among Indigenous Relations and Municipal Relations and northern affairs, if included?

* (14:50)

Ms. Clarke: The staff in total is 378 and I can break that down for you. Eighty-three of those are full-time on the Indigenous part of the portfolio right now; 295 are on the Municipal part of the portfolio.

Ms. Lathlin: Are there currently any vacancies within your department?

Ms. Clarke: Vacancies as of March 31st were 12 in the Indigenous and 31 Municipal.

Ms. Lathlin: Is the department actively trying to fill those vacancies and also following employment equity policy as well?

Ms. Clarke: We are pursuing filling these positions. However, we are under different rules in regards to finance as to what all will be filled. Both deputies within my first meetings made me aware that there was vacancies when I was first sworn in to this position.

So we are aware of the vacancies and we have been putting forward, on a priority basis, what needs to be filled at this time.

Ms. Lathlin: I have a question here that I'm asking with the most—utmost respect: With our government reducing the departments in order to save money, also considering projects to be under review that were promised by the former government, many projects that would be very beneficial and crucial in my constituency, I just wanted to ask you out of utmost respect with the government saying, you know, save money, save money, cutting, you know, reducing our deficit, what was—how was your feeling when the minister and—the Cabinet ministers and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) received a pay raise with the lines, you know, in spirit of reducing, but, however, not increasing the minimum wage. Like, how does—it just really bothers me how it was increased and whenever it's questioned—I'm just really curious as to how that came to that decision and also with you as my minister here, you as well received that pay increase as well.

Ms. Clarke: I'll do the salaries first. Salaries are not determined by the MLAs and I know, as past members, you're fully aware of that. We believe that the work of the independent commissioner and—you know, they set this fee or the wages for our MLAs and, you know, I don't question that. I didn't become an elected official looking for a raise, but there is protocol that is followed and I trust that process.

The merger in this particular case of two departments is actually a great saving. Like, I mean

that in itself is—merger—the merger of the former department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and Municipal Government, that's \$37,000 each. So that's a substantial saving of \$74,000 annually. The increase amounts to \$51,000, so.

A minister's salary is established by regulation made by the Manitoba Commissioner for MLA Pay, Allowances and Retirement Benefits, and I'm sure you're well aware of that.

In regards to the projects and that you speak of, those projects, of course, were promised by the former government. They exceeded by such a gross amount what is affordable, what money there is, and that's not even taking into consideration the excessive debt that we're having to manage, and I think it's been brought forward in the House on several occasions that just the amount of money spent on financing the debt alone would have covered many of these projects that you consider so worthwhile in your constituency, as well as they would be in my constituency.

There are needs throughout the province, and some of them are very, very serious needs and ones that we're very concerned about as well. But having an extensive business background, I know that you cannot keep up that level of debt and come out ahead. It's just not possible. At some point, there's a day of reckoning whereby you have to spend within your means, and anybody that's had any type of business experience knows this. There has to be a level of accountability and within any business—and we are managing a very large business here—but we're managing on behalf of the people of Manitoba. We're spending their dollars. They're entrusting us to do it correctly and that means choices. We all—everybody has choices.

Previous governments had to make choices, were supposed to make choices about, you know, how they raised the money to handle the projects they wanted to do. We're no different. We have to be accountable and that means sometimes very hard choices, but we have what I consider a very extensive wealth of knowledge within our Cabinet and within our caucus as to making good choices for the people of Manitoba. And will every project that's been committed to in the past be funded? We all know it's not possible, but I do honestly believe that there will be good choices made.

And you talk about it's particular in the North. We understand the need and I've met with several of your communities from the North already, and they

have described to me what are unbelievably good projects and projects that I would absolutely support, but all of these projects take dollars. We know that so it's going to be a matter of priorities for the people of the province of Manitoba.

And we have to take into consideration all regions. The North has extensive—extensive—issues and they definitely need to be considered, and I think this government's very committed to looking at those projects.

Ms. Lathlin: Again, with the utmost respect, this is a very disheartening issue with me with the pay increase.

And speaking of spending within our means, I've been questioned on the campaign trail regarding raising the minimum wage. Again, I need to have a more clear answer as to, you know, when you were talking about addressing excessive debt. You know, I knew if I was part of a team and offered a pay raise, I would morally put up my hand and say I wouldn't take it, especially when we're addressing excessive debt. And I just wanted to say—ask you, what would be your answer to say to myself, what do I tell our people in the constituency of The Pas or what do you tell people, say, if you are visiting our communities and they ask you the same question? What would be your answer to that to justify that pay raise?

Ms. Clarke: Again, I will 'reiterate' that I am working for the same—or, for much less pay than two ministers got, and I will do that job. I will do the job of two ministers, and I believe I'll do it well. I've got good support staff. I've got no more staff than two ministers had. And I've watched the efficiencies of the people that work in these departments. I think they are working hard. There's no spare time. The amount of money—I would have been paid twice as much had I been two people, but I'm not; I'm one. And I will do that job, and I will do it effectively. And I'll do it by consulting, you know, so that I will consult with you. I will consult with all other stakeholders in the province of Manitoba as well as the indigenous communities.

And we'll make sure that the money that is spent in their communities is spent with good value. And if we do that, if we look at these projects and—you know, we're being criticized about time, you know, like everything is supposed to be right now. And our government's being criticized for taking the time to look at projects, to look at issues brought forward. I think it's very important that we do, because you have to have a good understanding of what you're

dealing with in order to make decisions where money put into projects is well-spent so that there is money to do more projects. And I really believe that can happen. I'm—there's an economic value to doing that.

Is it going to happen overnight? No, it's not possible. These things take time. But, I mean, if we use the input of people within your region, with other—within other regions up north—I had a meeting last night with a group of four chiefs from the northern regions that have an awesome business plan. And they are intelligent; they're hard-working; and I was overwhelmed with the projects that they're bringing forward. And there would be nothing more exciting for this government to just be on-board with them and to be able to fund their requests, because they're great projects, and it would be such a benefit to the people of the North.

But by them having these great projects and viable projects, you know, if they could go forward, that would ease up a lot of the other spending and funding within all parts of the province. Not only that, but it would also start to do what we are hoping to do, which is form great partnerships with the indigenous, the people of the North, and all the people in Manitoba. If we start working together collaboratively and doing things intelligently with good business plans, you know what? We are going to generate more money, which is going to make it more viable for more businesses in the North, for better education for the children.

And those are the other discussions we've had. I spent an hour yesterday at a school in Winnipeg here that were—they had a big celebration for their truth and reconciliation Sacred Heart Garden. And just seeing those children and seeing the dedication of those teachers, that's our hope for the future. And, you know, if we do things right, now, we have that opportunity to do it as opposition—as government. We have an opportunity to start building for a far better future, a future that we're all asking for.

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Before I recognize the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin), I would like to advise that if the questioning is going to continue on the ministerial salary, we have set aside time for that, to deal with that resolution. And I would advise the member to keep the questions for that time.

Ms. Lathlin: I respect that, and that was my last question. Thank you for your comments.

* (15:00)

I wanted to refer to page 89 in regards to the Community Economic Development Fund. What is the status of that fund since it's been transferred to Growth and Enterprise and Trade?

Ms. Clarke: Just in regards to the funding, there has been changes as to where some of the funding and grants are located just for streamlining and for cutting some of the red tape, so it's not necessarily that some of this funding has disappeared or is less than. It has just been transferred over.

We are trying really hard within our government to make granting funding easier and more accessible for those people who are going to be using it, and I know on the Municipal side we're calling it a basket funding approach whereby there will be one application for perhaps four different, like, community places, the municipal road program and some of these.

We're trying to make it easier because there's been a lot of dissatisfaction in the past and, you know, there's so many different opportunities to apply for and they're at different times and we're working towards a basket funding model, especially in the municipal fund. But some of these funds are being transferred from one portfolio to another for easier accessibility, I think, basically. It's part of consolidation, basically, for all the economic development funds, and that now is under GET.

Ms. Lathlin: Same under Community Economic Development Fund. How many loans went out this year and what were the amounts and defaults? I had the opportunity to go over some report and I was pleased to see that there was a lot of small business loans provided in northern Manitoba, and I just wonder if you can share that with us today, please.

Ms. Clarke: Under the former government that would have come under Aboriginal Affairs or Municipal, but I don't have those reports because they're not—they're no longer under this portfolio for the Economic Development; they're now under GET.

Ms. Lathlin: That's—since it's no longer under Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, it would still have—it would still focus, right, like in northern Manitoba, like those small business loans to contribute to our economy as well, because I just found that when it was under that department it focused a lot on our northern communities and I just wonder if it's going to be under the same spirit since it's under another different department due to consolidation.

Ms. Clarke: Those economic development funds did flow through our department but they—to GET, but I am not aware that there would be any change in focus because we are very committed to economic development in the North. It's within the mandate for Growth, Enterprise and Trade and it's under my mandate to work with Growth, Enterprise and Trade on the indigenous side in a relationship model to work with our indigenous people, our indigenous communities, and I can't see that—I'm not aware, at least, of any changes in accessibility or the focus of those funds at all. I mean, that's our goal to work with the northern communities to—economic development, tourism—all those different aspects to build the North, so it's a very high priority for this government.

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you for your comments.

As I—numerous times I've had the honour and opportunity to share my background as an intergenerational survivor, three generations of residential school survivors, and my goal is to have that cycle broken with my daughter and my grandchildren.

So, with that, as a survivor, with the mandate letter and the Speech from the Throne and with the budget, it was quite disturbing how the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls to action were not recognized specifically within the Indigenous and Municipal Affairs, especially when an act, The Path to Reconciliation Act, was passed unanimously before we left for election.

And I just wanted to see if you could share your thoughts on as to why this act, that was passed unanimously, and this Canada-wide calls to action to address our residential school survivors were not specifically mentioned or honoured, especially within our department here.

Ms. Clarke: I realize how important this is and I've certainly been learning a lot about it. It's a conversation I have with all the leaders that I've met. I make sure I include it and ask questions and get their perspective on where we should be going and what we should be doing, and I realize—I got a far better understanding of it when I attended the blanket exercise a few weeks ago here at the Legislature on the Saturday morning and listened, for well over an hour, the story that was told by many survivors.

It was an amazing story. I've always been aware of it but, I guess, on a surface level. And I think a lot of people in Manitoba are—they do not

know about the residential schools or the survivors, you know. They—coming from a community in rural Manitoba, I'm aware of it because we deal with the First Nations—my husband and I and our business for the past 40 years—43 years—have dealt with a First Nations community. And we've had personal conversations with them. We're well aware of their, you know, them as individuals and the effects of residential schools.

So I'm not totally naive, but I know a lot of people in my community, a lot of people across Manitoba, when I travelled with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and there was never a lengthy discussion that—about the residential school survivors. But, being at the event I was at yesterday, it really brought home to me. There was one gentleman there that told of his experience and it was very personal and it was very heart-wrenching.

And, having been in Ottawa recently at a meeting with all the other ministers and premiers from across Canada, and I got to hear a little more about the past work that's been done, and I heard about the meeting in Manitoba just this past spring. And they talked in great length about where we need to go from here as individual provinces. And it gave me a lot of insight of the work that needs to be done.

We're totally committed to that. Just because it wasn't in the Throne Speech, in extensive—that, in no way, implicates or indicates what we're going to do as a government, as I'm going to do and a minister going forward. I'm totally committed to it. I'm totally committed to ensuring that the—that there's more communication with the people in our province to understand.

And to see grades 1 to 6 students yesterday, through their project, through their eyes—we need to be starting there, we need to—we may need to remember the past. We need to be sympathetic to those people who are still living that went through that, because how many more years 'til that generation's going to be gone.

But they were so compassionate through the children, yesterday, telling these, you know—just depicting with the silhouettes that they have on the fence all around their schools and their sacred heart garden and what it meant.

There was one heart—they had hearts—there was one there and it had four people depicted. And a student had done this, a grade 3 student. And they had these individual people, different coloured

people. And they had all these—it looked like balloons going up, but they were heart-shaped balloons. And you know what it said? We're all in this together. And that's what really spoke to me. It's not about this government, it's not about me as a minister, it's not about you as individual because you've lived it—it's about all of us. You know, you need to show us where to go, we need to do it. We need to work together and we need to make sure the next generation never has to live through this.

*(15:10)

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you for your comments.

In regards to when you had mentioned a lot of people don't know about the residential school experience, I just wanted to ask if you could share with me what leadership role would you play in ensuring that the residential school experience is going to be within our Manitoba school curriculum, so we can start generating our next generation of our people to be aware and maybe eliminate some of those stereotypes that our Aboriginal communities face. So, if you can share with that—with me, please, your leadership role and to make sure that takes place and ensures that we do educate our people, our Manitobans, and within your leadership role.

Ms. Clarke: Great question. We did—actually, I had a meeting following the ceremony at the school yesterday with the principal, the vice-principal, two of their staff that are very instrumental—one that was instrumental in the project, another one that is already very instrumental in a literacy and reading program for their grades 1 to 3—and how they are teaching their children differently.

And they explained to me, and we had such a short time frame, but they explained to me what they're doing with their primary grade children and how they're starting to educate differently. And they realize the need for them to learn to read and they need to learn to be more connected with the children.

They held an elder in their school. And I've actually had the opportunity to meet two different elders in the last seven, eight weeks, that were absolutely a tremendous impact on me. And it helped to make me feel more what's going on. Sometimes you have to approach things in a different way.

And how will I commit myself? I think I've made it very clear my commitment is strong and it's solid to work with whoever is willing to work together. And it has to be collaboratively. This isn't a job for one person, one government. It's got to be

throughout our province. And I have no issues with working throughout the province.

And that's where the municipal side comes in. I've got connection to every single community in this province. I'm not new to them. I've been working with them for eight years, four as a vice-president working on the behalf of all communities in Manitoba already. They know me. They trust me. I've got that trust on the municipal side. I'm going to work very hard to have that same trust within our indigenous communities.

You and I have that opportunity to walk that journey together. We can do it. And, I mean, what a winning situation, to be able to do that together as two young women—well, one young one, one older—but, you know, we have a great opportunity to teach these next generations and be a leading role and such good examples of how we want our children to grow up and the paths that we want them to take so that they can all grow up feeling good about themselves, not forgetting their past.

I don't want my children to forget their past or my great-grandparents' past and the hardships they came through in other countries. I'm not going to forget that. And I've already been teaching my children and my three grandsons.

And, I mean, we've got such a huge opportunity. Let's not—I don't want to be negative. I don't—I want to respect the—what you bring to me as other individuals. But I want to take it forward. I want to work on the next generations. I want to work with providing hope for our next 'generations,' whether it's economic development, whether it's truth and reconciliation, murdered and missing women, you know, educating our children so that they're learning at the primary grades and that, you know what, so that they can get right through to grade 12 and not have barriers. It's up to us to do that.

We need to break those barriers. But we need to do it. We can't be pointing in other directions. We have to provide that leadership. We're in the position to do it.

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Before I recognize the member, I just want to remind everyone to direct your comments through the Chair, refrain from using you, use the member's constituency or the minister's. Thank you.

Ms. Lathlin: The TRC recommendations may have not been in the from—the Speech from the Throne, but what is your department doing to start discussing

and developing policies to acknowledge and carry out the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? And that's the first part of my question.

Ms. Clarke: I'll keep this one more brief.

We are actually providing a report by the end of the month, which I'm sure everyone is waiting for.

Also, we—there will be engagement within the spirit of the path of reconciliation in regards to the act—sorry—Bill 18, of course, is The Path to Reconciliation Act, and it's the act that I am responsible for, as you understand. So, in the coming days, we'll be providing an update on the activities that have been ongoing, and I look forward to meeting with more indigenous leaders on this as, you know, we look to the path ahead of us.

I've also had the opportunity to meet with leaders such as Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson. And we had an extensive discussion about this—as well as Arlen Dumas, Chief Arlen Dumas. And we spoke a lot about how we can expand our relationship and, there too, that's the conversation I've had with so many that I have met with as to, you know, I asked the question, are you willing to work in partnership and, you know, our goal is not, down the road, not have a path for municipal and have a path for indigenous. We want these paths to come together so that we're working together strong, you know, whether it's on social issues, economic issues, whatever.

But, if we work together, we're going to have stronger communities; we're going to have healthier families; and we're going to have a much better province going forward.

Ms. Lathlin: My next question is in regards to this report.

Will it illustrate the reporting requirements because, with the calls to action, it's going to involve various departments such as child welfare, Education, Justice and Health? What is the plan to ensure that the communication, if you will, with all these departments in regards to The Path to Reconciliation Act—will it illustrate the communication and the reporting through annual reports as one or each department?

How would your role play with that?

Ms. Clarke: Just as a bit of a background, I will provide.

The Path to Reconciliation Act outlines Manitoba's commitment to reconciliation, and it defines what a reconciliation process might entail. Specifically, the bill calls for designation of a member of the executive council, which is minister responsible for reconciliation, to lead the government's participation in the reconciliation process.

And this will be done by making recommendation on measures to advance reconciliation. It will be done by promoting initiatives to advance reconciliation across all sectors of society, including interdepartmental, intergovernmental, corporate and community initiatives.

It will be done by promoting recognition of the contributions of indigenous peoples to the founding of Manitoba. It will also be done by making recommendations to the government about financial priorities and resource allocation across the government in relation to the reconciliation.

It will be the development of a reconciliation strategy. It will be the development of an annual progress report on reconciliation, including measures taken and engagement with indigenous people to implement the reconciliation strategy.

Now the act has two provisions which need to be considered. Within three months after the end of the fiscal year, which is June 30th next week, I must table a copy of the annual progress report to the Assembly and make it available to the public. And, within 30 days of coming into force of the act, which was in April, I must arrange for the translation into the seven additional languages.

So, further to that, Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action impact many policy areas which are under the provincial jurisdiction such as, also, child welfare, Education, Health and Justice. And we have already passed that act, which will guide Manitoba's reconciliation measures, including ongoing engagement with indigenous peoples in the development and implementation of a reconciliation strategy.

* (15:20)

Ms. Lathlin: In speaking in spirit of reconciliation, I wanted to ask your—what is the position of the—of our government to bring—regarding the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and the status of that, please?

Ms. Clarke: Yes, that is going to be brought forward, but it is under Families, did you say? *[interjection]* Yes. So it's not part of this portfolio.

Ms. Lathlin: I didn't quite hear the response.

Ms. Clarke: The Healthy Child's portion of this is under Families. It's not under our portfolio, so that would have to be directed to another department.

Ms. Lathlin: Another committee that I had the honour of sitting on when I was first elected was the Aboriginal issues of Cabinet; I just wanted to know, what is the status of that?

Ms. Clarke: Yes, that is under this portfolio, but it's under consideration at this time.

Ms. Lathlin: Why would the Aboriginal issues of Cabinet be under consideration under Indigenous and Municipal Relations Department?

Ms. Clarke: I think, right now, it's just under the essence of time and priorities. We have tried really hard to address absolutely everything, but having given the Throne Speech and the budget process, our time in hours—we just have not been able to deal with absolutely everything, but it definitely is a priority. And I have a very long list of priorities and a very long list of meetings that are on hold right now. And I continue—I will be continuing to work throughout the summer on getting through my backlog of issues and meetings to make sure that when we get back into a fall session that I have a much better understanding and there—that there has been these discussions held, but there just hasn't. It is a priority.

Ms. Lathlin: I have before me—I don't know if we can—I'm not tabling anything or anything. But Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet, a lot of very important issues that our members have sat around and gave focus on, especially within the department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

And, again, I just need to ask you again to please explain as to why this very important committee that specifically address Manitoba's report on the implementation committee, update on the round table of missing, murdered Aboriginal women, tripartite funding for AMC health, Hughes inquiry final implementation report.

I just wanted to ask our minister to further clarify, like, will this committee be disappearing or are—until you catch up on this file, will this committee resurface in the fall? Is that what I'm understanding?

Ms. Clarke: Indigenous issues are being dealt with by the Cabinet directly. I don't know what you have in your file there. I have not seen what you have in your file, so I can't answer directly to that. The issues are not being addressed, rather, they have being discussed directly within Cabinet, and what is discussed in Cabinet I can't bring forward at this point. That is an in-camera meeting.

Ms. Lathlin: It is my understanding that our issues here are being, like, discussed as a whole with Cabinet and not specifically with a focus team such as this committee, the Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet, which could help with important discussions with—especially with our folks who come with a lot of knowledge and experience to help you with your role.

Ms. Clarke: I understand totally what you're saying, and that's why, as I indicated in my opening remarks, I would have—that that is exactly why I have requested as many meetings as I can on indigenous affairs. I have not overlooked the municipal side of my portfolio, but given the fact that I have more extensive working knowledge with that side of the portfolio, I have literally given, probably, 80 per cent of my time on indigenous issues. And I know by what you're saying, I know by what I've heard in Cabinet and in our question periods and that, how concerned members are from northern Manitoba as well as the indigenous, but, you know, I will continue to work with everyone to get all the information I can and work on your issues.

Ms. Lathlin: Madam Chair, I think I referred you, so I apologize for that.

I wanted to ask about—which was, I believe this was mentioned in the mandate letter, establishing a framework for respectful and productive consultations with indigenous communities. I was wondering if the minister can elaborate that and provide more information as my role as critic and as our working role—relationship together?

Ms. Clarke: I just want to make one more comment to your previous question and maybe we'll enlighten this a little bit for you.

These issues that you speak of, I think they're considered too important to not be dealt with directly by Cabinet. I think our transition team and our Premier (Mr. Pallister), when they designed this portfolio of Indigenous and Municipal Relations, it's not about affairs; it's, you know, it's been Municipal

Government; it's been Intergovernmental Affairs. There's been many different—and we had, you know, Northern Affairs, and Aboriginal affairs.

When I was given this portfolio, and I spent a lot of time just thinking about the title of the position, and when you think about it, like Indigenous and Municipal Relations, I'm taking the relations part of it very seriously because I think that's what's been lacking, and when you talk about the framework I think that's what relations is about, is building a framework, a framework where we can work together, a framework where we all have input, and a framework that will go into the future to build better relationships and better partnerships.

And I'm hearing this—this is—I've had this discussion with some of the municipal people, but I've had more of these discussions with the indigenous communities and the chiefs-in-councils. I've also had these discussions with—I don't know how many there was in the particular group, but when there was a blockade at Split Lake and I invited them all into my office along with the ministers of Infrastructure and Crown Services and we sat and we talked and we listened, we literally listened to their concerns about the road in their area, and it was very extreme. They were very concerned about safety. They were very concerned about, you know, how to deal with this, and their initial thoughts were that they had to put up a blockade and they had to protest on the front steps of this Legislature.

And, I mean, I've seen lots of protests in past years with not just indigenous people, with many other groups that feel that this was the way that they would be heard and be seen by the public, and this one in particular really concerned me because as minister indigenous affairs, those were people that I represent, out on the front steps of the Legislature, protesting, and I asked the other two ministers for their consideration in meeting with this group the following day. They wanted a minister—or, pardon me, they wanted a meeting with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) which was not possible. And we invited them in to meet with them the following day, and there was leaders there from, I believe, four or five, maybe more, First Nations communities. The chiefs—they all came to support Split Lake.

They all had an opportunity to speak and that was the first time I met the one elder that was with them, and she sat right beside me during this whole meeting, and when all the chiefs had spoke I asked her to speak and she spoke, and she spoke about the

community and she spoke about the children and she spoke about the future of the community.

I made comments when we were done and I told these people from the communities from the North that it was really sad that they thought that they would have to put up blockades and protest to get the ear of this government. I told them we were a new government and if they wanted to speak to us all they had to do was come through the door and sit around our table. They didn't have to protest. They didn't have to make their issues publicly with so much pain. They should come to our table.

To me, that's creating a framework.

* (15:30)

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you for your comments.

In regards to natural resources, what is being done by the department in regards to natural resources co-management between First Nations and the provincial government?

Ms. Clarke: Can I just ask you restate your question so I don't give you a bunch of information that you didn't ask for? Thanks.

Ms. Lathlin: My question was: What is being done by the department in the area of natural resources co-management between First Nations and the provincial government?

Ms. Clarke: At this time, the department is identifying strategies and best practices in resource benefit sharing to inform Manitoba's approach for the future.

On November 20th, 2015, the minister of Mineral Resources announced that the province will share up to 25 per cent of mining tax revenue from new mines with First Nations and Metis while not adding any new taxes to industry. A distribution model is being developed by First Nation members of the minister's Mining Advisory Council.

There's some background information, but I'm sure you're probably familiar with that because that would have come from your government.

Ms. Lathlin: Speaking of that, does that Mining Advisory Council still exist with various community partners?

Ms. Clarke: I'm certain that would be under GET, because he is also responsible for those—anything under resources throughout the province, which would include northern Manitoba.

And that's the—I guess that's the different in this government, too. Within our mandates, we are mandated to work with other departments. So, when we're talking about the North, for instance, I would be working with Sustainable Development; I would be working with Growth, Enterprise and Trade; I would be working with Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen), Minister of Health, Minister of Education.

And they're responsible for the actual projects. They're responsible for implementation of the projects, et cetera. As you can understand, my role in this would be more on the relationship side, working with the indigenous communities, working with all northern communities. But we would be working together, and so in—by doing that, that we're not leaving out important components, that I am there to work with communities, to work with the leaders so that there is that consultation, there is collaboration, and that further and more importantly that there's communication.

There's work to be done, and we all have our roles. But we are constantly meeting, perhaps like myself, with the Minister of Infrastructure, we work closely together because we're working on the northern aspects, but we are also working on the east-side road, you know, so that, you know, there's discussion about what's happening with the communities and that. Well, we work together so that we're hopefully covering, you know, all aspects of what goes on in regards to our First Nations peoples.

Ms. Lathlin: Speaking of East Side Road Authority, we know that it's been transferred over to the Infrastructure Department; however, will the community benefit agreements included—will also be included in that transfer? And how will this department also be dealing with those agreements as well?

Ms. Clarke: Those agreements and the actual work is through Infrastructure, and I don't—I can't answer your questions.

I can probably share with you that we are actually going to, at least for myself, I will be meeting with Shoal Lake on Monday. I've been allowed leave from government to go on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to meet with the people of those communities.

Ms. Lathlin: I'm just going over our Estimates book here.

I just had a—in regards to the Taxicab Board, as we all know, there's been many concerns regarding behaviours of people employed with Unicity.

I can't specifically name what cab company, but I can personally share, as an indigenous woman, I've been personally verbally attacked because I'm an Aboriginal woman, by taxicab drivers in my past and thrown out of cabs because I simply defended the false information and stereotype there that Indians don't pay taxes. So, basically, we got into a heated debate, kicked out of the cab because I was trying to educate him on stereotypes that he had about Aboriginal people, which is quite, you know, alarming.

And one time, too, they didn't want to pick up my sister, as well, another Aboriginal woman, because she was catching a cab on Ellice Avenue and assumed that she was a prostitute.

What is the relationships, what are the conversations that are having currently with the Taxicab Board to address this concern regarding racism, if you will, and getting rid of that stereotype, and educating our people who provide these important services of transportation, and ensure that we don't have any more headlines like that making the news regarding how indigenous people, especially, in particular, women, are being treated?

Ms. Clarke: We did have this discussion with your colleague in the previous Estimates session, but I'm happy to go and discuss it with you again.

Those types of behaviour are totally inappropriate, and I think we all agree on that, whether you're indigenous or, regardless, male, female, you know, there should—those types of behaviour are not acceptable. And it should not happen, but we know it does. It happens with a lot of other people as well.

You'll be happy to know that there is a review under way. And they'll be looking at all aspects of the Taxicab Board. It's going to be an extensive review.

And the Taxicab Board met with Southern Chiefs' Organization to hear their concerns from the indigenous community and identify strategies for improvements. As a result, the Compliance Unit increased road patrols and Taxicab Board, and they're examining to make enhancements to that taxicab driver training program.

And it is our hope, once this review is completed, that these types of things will not occur again. It's not appropriate; it's not fair and—but it is being addressed.

* (15:40)

Ms. Lathlin: I just wanted to talk, have a conversation, ask questions regarding the Yes! North strategy. In particular, because northern Manitoba—the last stats that I received as a representative workforce co-ordinator for University College of the North was that the indigenous population in northern Manitoba is 72 per cent and I'm pretty sure that's quite higher now.

But, as I was an employee at University College of the North, the Northern Lights strategy was announced from Winnipeg in regards to developing a northern strategy, and I'm just really curious, I've already asked a minister on this as well. It went from addressing—you know, priorities were identified so far such as—there's, like, five bullets here: jobs, training and the economy; mining and mineral resources; healthy living; infrastructure and tourism. And from there, it took a spin to now that it will focus on two priority areas under the new Yes! North initiative.

So I'm kind of confused as a northerner. How did it go from those five bullets to the Yes! North strategy will focus on two priority areas: (1) sustainable development of natural resources including forestry and mining; (2) tourism opportunities including beluga whale watching, polar bear and—I can't—northern light tours and fishing and hunting.

So, with that, I just wanted to see, how did it transition from addressing these foundations to business and tourism?

Ms. Clarke: As indicated, a lot of the—like, the northern Yes! North strategy now, which is the one developed by this particular government since we've been elected, is being led through GET, Growth, Enterprise and Trade. And I know that he has had several meetings already with northern communities, and it falls under the 100-day priority, and I know that he's prepared for that and continues to work diligently to meet that deadline and have a strategy in place. So I—you will be hearing more about it in the very near future. And all those are what were highlighted, you know, the train—or, pardon me, the mining and the tourism and that. Those are—I would guess from the meetings that I've had with northern

communities, those are very high priorities for them. They see that as—those have been brought to me as priorities, anyways.

I don't think that once we get going that we're restricted to staying within that. As you've indicated, you know, colleges of the North are very important, and we've heard that discussion in question period with the Minister of Education, and, you know that I'm—I don't think there's any restriction from him moving forward and having those conversations and following through, wherever that particularly takes it.

The North is a high priority and it—we're not restricted to one thing. We're there to grow the economy. We're there to make sure that the children are educated, and when they are that they don't have—if they want to stay in the North, that there is a life there for them, a life that is—has value, a life that has jobs, jobs that are going to be beneficial to them that are going to give them pride in who they are, and that they'll be able to raise future generations in the North if that's their choice, you know, provide health care in the North. And that's a lot of what I heard last night about the money that is spent just transporting people from the North with health-care issues that could very well be treated at home.

One particular story of a gentleman with dialysis, he's elderly and he literally cannot go home anymore. He wants to be at home. He wants to be where his family is. He wants to be where his grandchildren are. But, you know, there's very large expenses, they're very extensive for transporting back and forth to the North.

So, when we talk about developing the North, working with the people of the North, we're looking for value there too because, as I indicated earlier, the better job we do of spending the taxation dollars now and investing them with value, that's going to provide much more opportunities in the future. And I mean that's what we're doing right now, we're trying to build a future for our next generations, but that comes based on good decisions now.

So I don't think because it indicates that it's just about mining or this and that, in order to have a strong economy it involves everything and we're not restricted or limited to, we're here to promote and make a better Manitoba overall.

Ms. Lathlin: When you speak of—I personally think that your leadership, your role as minister for indigenous and municipal affairs is crucial to,

especially in regards to Aboriginal population in northern Manitoba, like, I shared it's 72, but I know it's probably much higher.

Is your role involved within these conversations regarding Yes! North with the Minister of Growth and Enterprise and Trade, there is a couple of times you have mentioned that's their department, that's their department, but with our indigenous population I believe that your involvement is crucial and your participation in these conversations so you are able to provide us some answers today. Do you agree with that, and will you become more involved and sit at these tables as your leadership, your role as minister, especially when Yes! North—I particularly thought that you would have full knowledge of this initiative and share with us the overview of Yes! North particular because, like I said, our Aboriginal population is very large in northern Manitoba and it's growing and will continue to grow.

Ms. Clarke: Yes, and I would hope six months from now, a year from now, I'm going to have a lot better answers for all your questions. I've spent a lot of time, as I've indicated already, meeting with people. I am trying to be the biggest sponge possible, to absorb as much information. And every group, every individual that comes forward and that I'm meeting with has different information, good information, information that I can get really excited about. Some information that really makes me quite sad and concerned, you know, when I hear some of the hardships that—and I know some of the conditions that the people in the North lived, or, not lived, are living with now, you know, where there's no clean drinking water. I've seen first-hand the results of the 2011 flood. I was very involved in the 2011 flood. I was at these communities, I went around with the flood commissioner at that time, I met with these communities. I know full hand some of the hardships, especially the, you know, communities in the Lake St. Martin area that are still displaced. I mean, they still aren't going home.

I haven't lived it, I'm not going to try and pretend that I will ever understand to the level that you do, I can't possibly, I haven't lived your life. But I know that I'm a committed person and I know that when I take on a position that it gets my one hundred per cent attention, and I consider myself to be a compassionate, hard-working person. And given that I will be at those tables, I've been—the ministers and I we invite each other, if there's a group coming in or there's an issue coming forward that we figure, you know, as I indicated when I met

with the group from Split Lake, I invited the minister from Infrastructure to be there, I invited the minister from Crowns, because what we were going to discuss affected all of us. When there's meetings going on in other departments where they figure there's an indigenous component, they invite me and I can go and I can listen.

And I've been doing—I guess that's the thing right now, I've been doing a lot of listening because I think right now that's the best role for me is to listen. I expect to learn a lot just from the conversations and questions that we're going to have going on between us today. I've already learned a lot and I have a lot more to learn.

* (15:50)

But I consider myself fortunate that I have that opportunity to do that. And if, at the end of this year and the next year and the year after, each year I can show that working collaboratively we've gone forward as much as we can and continued to grow stronger, then we're doing our job. And I look forward to that. I look forward to, a year from now, that we can stand together and look back and say, you know what, because we worked for the benefit of the people that we serve and that we work with the best intentions possible—and even the best intentions possible will not always work out. I mean, I've lived through good times. I've lived through some really tough times, too, and I know that it's not a perfect world that we live in. And our ancestors come from a much less perfect world than we do.

But we've got a certain amount of resources to work with, and one is, you know, our education. We have more education than our predecessors did so we need to make that work. I've got a lot of experiences. I've got life experience in business, I've got life experience in municipal politics. I want to use them to best of my abilities. You've got extensive knowledge, too, that will benefit me in a great way and—as do all our other colleagues. And I think working together and respecting each other and working on behalf of the people that we serve, we have great opportunities going forward.

Ms. Lathlin: Again, just to demonstrate how important your leadership role, how you should be involved with the Yes! North initiative is because—with the consultations that had happened, I had communicated with my leadership and my constituency which involves First Nations and community councils that fall under the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

So, with that, probably one leadership was consulted regarding Yes! North initiative. And, again, your role is crucial to be involved to ensure that these communities—because they do fall under your department—to ensure that their input and meaningful—meaningful—conversations do happen. And I'm pretty sure the member from Kewatinook can agree with that as well.

So, again, with that, can you please provide an overview of Yes! North initiative and explain—especially when a lot of our communities fall under your department and your involvement is needed at that table so you can voice their concerns and their input as the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations.

Ms. Clarke: I will be at those tables. I've actually had invitations from some of the indigenous communities to visit the communities, and it is my intention to do so. I have committed to a couple already that will take place this summer. I also have a constituency that I have to look after, but as minister for this portfolio, it is my full intention to give you the representation that you're expecting as time allows.

I've also got, as I've indicated, I've got a very strong and hard-working staff here that will be working with me to ensure that this happens. They're very knowledgeable. They've got experience in the Aboriginal Affairs department and they have been a great resource to me so far. And I know with their help and working together that, hopefully, we will be able to provide the kind of support and what you're expecting and what you want for your communities, because I know what you're wanting for them is in their best interests, without a doubt.

Ms. Lathlin: Does the department still regain control over the implementation of the Treaty Land Entitlement agreement?

With some background, when I was employed with the—Indian and Northern Affairs Canada as addition to reserves analyst, I had—it was exciting work converting Crown land into reserve status under Treaty Land Entitlement and under the Northern Flood Agreement. And there was a time, there was a—I believe there was a commitment to—from both the federal, provincial and our—the treaty land committee to fast-track moving lands.

And I just wanted to know, what is the status on the remaining First Nations that are still waiting for

their lands to be converted to honour fully the Treaty Land Entitlement agreement?

Ms. Clarke: I don't have an extensive background in the TLE, but within my role on AMM I was involved with some of the meetings with TLE. More recently, I attended a meeting in Winnipeg here—I think it's about five weeks ago—with many of the chiefs and communities in regards to TLE, and they expressed some of the concerns that they were having in the length of time, you know, the—not just the months and days but the years that they've been waiting on certain property transfers. And, of course, you know, it's the indigenous communities that are involved and then—the federal government as well as the provincial government as well as the municipal governments.

It's an extensive process, and it's taking a very long length of time, there's no doubt about it. And this is probably the one area where I see the most benefit of this municipal-indigenous relations.

I know, from having been on the municipal side, they're also frustrated and have concerns about the process, as do the indigenous communities. And I think this is—I genuinely feel that this is one area where we can maybe—when we talk about red tape and the elimination of red tape, maybe this is one area that we should make a very high priority to quit—you know, there's got to be a better way of doing it, and I think we have an opportunity to do so, and I made a commitment to those chiefs when I met with them that I would work with them and try to find better ways of communicating, perhaps. Perhaps it's a better way of communicating and—or at least looking at the process and trying to find out reasons for the length of time. I know the Crown lands was definitely one of the biggest issues that has been discussed, and we will be having further discussions on that, but I've only met with them once so far.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Couple of quick questions. Is your department, Madam Minister, responsible for active transportation initiatives in the province?

Ms. Clarke: That would be a yes. Keep that one simple.

Mr. Altemeyer: Top marks for a straight answer. That's—it's great. You're doing light years better than some of your colleagues.

How—what percentage of the budget this year is dedicated to active transportation projects?

* (16:00)

Ms. Clarke: Okay, active transportation. Active transportation is not broken down per line, per se. We have several staff that work on it. Some of it's done through infrastructure agreements and other municipal funds. They work on developing the policy. They also work with the communities on their plans, et cetera. So it's not just a one-line thing.

Mr. Altemeyer: Would the minister be able to provide us—and it doesn't have to be right now, it can just be later on—a list of the active transportation projects that will happen this fiscal year?

Ms. Clarke: All right, the list is not complete on the active transportation funding at this time. That list will be available at the end of the year when the funding has taken place. So until that funding is completed, the end list won't be available. So.

Mr. Altemeyer: So would it be possible to get a list of the active transportation projects that have been proposed to the minister's office for consideration this year?

Ms. Clarke: If you're asking for projects that are proposed, like, to date, like, 'til this date, that could be made available. However, it will not be a complete list because that will not be available until the end of the year. So it's works-in-progress.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, thanks very much for that. And yes, just works-in-progress will be fine. Totally understand that a department's going to receive requests and ideas over the course of a year, but just a list of the projects that are actively under consideration would be very helpful.

And just to drill down on one particular very large and, in my humble opinion, an important one, if the minister can provide an update, please, on the status of the separated bike path and active transportation corridor that will be attached to the southwest rapid transit corridor in the city of Winnipeg?

* (16:05)

Ms. Clarke: All right. In regards to the southwest project, as far as the planning proponent of this, that's left to the City of Winnipeg. It's their project so they, of course, are responsible for the planning. Funding—that is, of course, partners with federal government, City of Winnipeg, Province of Manitoba. So we are part of the funding process; they are in charge of the planning component of it. So in regards to what they want to do is within that. That's their decision.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you. We're getting a good rhythm.

Just further to the southwest bike path, then. Has the amount of money that our previous government had allocated for that bike path, is that being maintained? And could the minister or her staff just confirm how much provincial money will be made available to help that project along, when the time comes, from the City to design and build it?

Ms. Clarke: Yes. In regards to the overall project as prescribed with the City of Winnipeg, the level of funding is the same.

Mr. Altemeyer: Different infrastructure topic but still within the City of Winnipeg.

The sewage upgrades—does that item fall under your government's—or your department's jurisdiction?

Ms. Clarke: Thanks for your question.

The infrastructure funding does fall within our department in regards to the project, for sure. However, on the policy side of it, in regards to the nutrient and all those types of things, that, of course, is under Sustainable Development. So we're just in the funding end of the project.

Mr. Altemeyer: And how much does the department have budgeted—well, what's the overall budget for the project? Not that we would ever question the numbers we see in the media, but if we could just get a confirmation that we are on the same page in terms of the total costs of the sewage upgrade.

And let's start with the North End treatment plant, for starters. So what's the anticipated overall budget for that, and what would the provincial share be? Is it the usual one third or is it different? Thank you.

* (16:10)

Ms. Clarke: All right. So, in regards to the North End plant, at this time the City of Winnipeg is still finalizing their costs. They have not completed the costs, et cetera, on their project so they will be continuing their discussions. So at this time we don't have a set amount about contribution from the Province.

We've been in discussion with the federal government. The Minister of Infrastructure, he was actually here just a few weeks ago and we had extensive discussions with him about infrastructure funding, you know, that's coming up in the near future.

So what has to happen they have to determine their level of funding, which we are not aware of at this point, for this as well as other projects, and we certainly are working hard on behalf of the Province of Manitoba and for this project as well as others to ensure that we can get the best amount of funding dollars from them. But, on the other hand, we have to be able to have our portion available, as well, to make sure that these projects can go forward.

At this point the federal government has only released phase 1 of the infrastructure funding, and so it is considered that this North End project will be in the phase 2, so just not at that point yet.

Mr. Altemeyer: What's the timing difference between federal funding that falls under phase 1 or phase 2 as near as the Province understands?

Ms. Clarke: Time frame for phase 1, which is the one that's currently in the queue. It's kind of a short turnaround. These projects have to be complete by the end of March in 2018. So, if they're not started, or just, like, almost shovel-ready, as we say, to go right now for larger projects, that's a very short time frame to do large projects. We're getting too far into the year as far as construction, et cetera.

We did ask Minister Sohi when he was here about some flexibility on this. You know, even end of March, if we could get flexibility, perhaps, 'til the end of the year, December, just so that we'd have that construction summer, you know. It would definitely make a big difference. He was very positive that there could be some flexibilities. We didn't discuss what that would look like, but he made it very clear that the federal government wants to work with the Province of Manitoba to do as much infrastructure as possible. They're looking forward to a really good working relationship with the Province of Manitoba, which was really encouraging.

I know, from my background with municipal government and the City of Winnipeg, that—and, I mean, we heard that throughout the campaign season this time around, and probably the last election too, about the deficit for infrastructure dollars. I mean, it's just growing, growing, and so we want to be able to, you know, get as many projects in there as we can.

The projects that are coming forward are so huge, the dollar values. They're such big projects. And the pots of money just—it can take just such a few projects, you know, if—depending on what gets chosen to go forward to complete.

So, given that phase 2 isn't even in the queue yet, there is no schedule for that as far as time.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you for the answers, Madam Minister. I certainly, you know, agree. Lots of projects out there that need to be, you know, started, completed as quickly as possible. And hopefully the feds will be helpful on that front.

In that vein, would it not be a big delay of the planned improvements for the North End pollution plant—sewage treatment plant in Winnipeg to now re-enter for at least the third time a question of whether it's going to be just phosphorus, or phosphorus and nitrogen? Would that not take this project right out of the window for federal infrastructure money?

Ms. Clarke: As indicated, the City is working on this. So where they go with it—I mean, they've still got time, obviously, to design—redesign this plan according to what their needs are, and what they want this project to look like.

* (16:20)

This project is already on the radar. It's—we did discuss it with the federal ministers, so it's at that discussion level, although we can't present the project because it's not completed, but it is—it's a preliminarily—preliminary high level. It's on their radar. We brought it forward, and we'll probably continue to do so. That won't be the last conversation we have with the minister—as well as the staff are always in contact with our Infrastructure Secretariat, which is right here in the city as well.

So the details will continue to be a priority. They will continue to be discussed, and this will align it with—and our staff believe that this phase 2 funding could likely start in 2019-2020, possibly, which time frame for the project for the North End would be just about right. It would probably align quite nicely with that, and there's a possibility that these projects could end in 2026. I think that's the deadline for this next, you know, for the infrastructure at this point. So it—timing could be perfect, could be right, but it's definitely there.

Mr. Altemeyer: I appreciate where the minister's coming from. I have a little bit of background on this file, as it happens and, of course, as much as the City is responsible for the design work, the Province is the regulator in terms of which nutrients and what levels are allowed to escape sewage systems, not just in the city of Winnipeg, but across the province.

So I would suggest that it's not entirely the City's choice in this matter. The Province does have the ability to regulate and, in fact, our government had to nudge the City on quite a few occasions just to get them this far along. So I guess my—and I'm guessing that this would actually fall under the purview of sustainable development, since, as you mentioned, they would be doing the policy piece, whereas your department is providing the dollars to make it happen once they decide.

But, from your own department's perspective, would it not be your priority to get this done as quickly as possible, since every year the project is delayed is going to make it more expensive?

Ms. Clarke: I think that's the dilemma with every project, large or small. Every year that they wait, definitely, costs escalate and, in some cases, they escalate much higher.

I think one of the things, and getting away from the North End project for just a minute, in regards to infrastructure funding for our municipalities, for the city of Winnipeg, we are seeing tenders coming in on infrastructure projects at a much lower cost right now. I was involved on the other side of infrastructure funding back through our flood years when there was so much work, and any project that we wanted to complete, we paid substantially more for because the demand for our construction people was so high that we ended up paying exuberant costs for infrastructure.

And I think that was—if there's a positive discussion in 2016, it's that tenders are coming in below expected, which is good news for all of us because that means that there possibly could be money to fund additional projects, you know, even if they're small projects. You know, projects in smaller communities, like, when we're talking about the North End project, I mean, these are massive projects. There's projects in the Winkler-Morden area, you know, that they need in regards to waste water, I believe it is, millions and millions of dollars. Well, if there's money left over in this pot to fund smaller projects for smaller communities, that's a win-win for all of us, and I mean, you know.

So these are the kind of things that we're looking at and taking into consideration going forward. It's a real balancing act but, usually, I mean, there's not anywhere near enough money, and we're all aware of that. The projects are so many and the costs are so high, to fund all these projects in the coming years is next to impossible. But some of them are critical.

They're very high priority; you know, we're talking about clean drinking water, we're talking about waste water. These are very serious matters and, you know, transitioning from, you know, when we're talking about the phosphorus and the nutrients and all that sort of thing, projects like in Portage la Prairie, you know, these are very hard to fund, but they have to happen, and we've got to find ways of doing it.

So we will be working with our partners of federal government, as well as the municipalities, the City of Winnipeg, and, you know, Sustainable Development. We'll all work together to make sure that the projects, first of all, are done right, and, as our government has indicated, done so that there's value for the money in that we are funding and doing the best job we can, and that we're getting the best deal from the federal government that we can, and getting as much infrastructure dollars as we can into the province of Manitoba. It's a win-win for all of us, so we'll be doing our part.

Mr. Altemeyer: Madam Minister, just a couple more questions, then I'll turn it back over to my hard-working colleague here from The Pas. But two more, just if I may.

It's very encouraging to hear the tenders generally are coming in lower. That absolutely can be very helpful to anyone's budget. And would that not also be another argument, therefore, of getting the North End sewage treatment plant project started as soon as possible, to take advantage of this economic window that your government might be able to take advantage of?

Ms. Clarke: Okay, another great answer. *[interjection]* Pardon me? *[interjection]* We will.

In regards to the phase 1 funding that's available now, the City of Winnipeg and the North End project—they don't fit the criteria. So, even if they were ready right now, today, they don't fit the criteria of this particular.

So that's why we're continuing to work with the federal government and ensuring that they're aware of this project, and getting, you know, that level of discussion so that when phase 2 is available to them—is available to us, that this project's already in the queue and they fit into that criteria for phase 2. So all this has already been considered, and we are totally aware of the project overall. But the funding criteria seems to change—it changes from one lump of funding 'til the next sometimes.

Mr. Altemeyer: That's interesting. What disqualifies the North End treatment plant from phase 1 funding, and is the same true of the south end treatment plant project, as well?

* (16:30)

Ms. Clarke: Okay, two components that make either the North End or the south end projects ineligible for this phase 1. The first one is completion by 2018. These projects can't—are not—it's not possible for them to meet that deadline.

The other one is they have to be incremental projects and they just—they don't fit that criteria.

Mr. Altemeyer: That's a good clarification, thanks for that.

A related question, how would the Province's share of the costs of the North End plan, let's say, change if only phosphorus is required to be removed from sewage?

Ms. Clarke: Unfortunately, we can't supply with those details. We don't have them.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, sorry, allow me to rephrase it. Recognizing you don't have final designs, final costs from the City, generally speaking, can you offer a percentage of the—of a change in what the Province's contribution would have to be? Like, if—just to take round numbers—if the current proposal of nitrogen and phosphorus removal costs \$300 million and our share would be \$100 million under that scenario, what would our share be if it was just phosphorus that was being removed—just as a per cent—ballpark.

Ms. Clarke: As you can—I'm sure you can appreciate, right now we'd be guessing at those figures because we don't have the cost figures for the project and we also don't know what the federal government's willing to put into these projects. So for us to guess is probably not the right direction to go.

Mr. Altemeyer: Just to say thank you to both, Madam Chair and Madam Minister, and the staff for helping me with my questions today.

I'll turn it back over to colleague from The Pas. Thanks.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): My question, first of all, I'm going to start with The Forks. The roof is leaking—*[interjection]*

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

Ms. Klassen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question has to do with The Forks. The roof is leaking and it's been a concern for a lot of people, and it came to our desk the other day so we want to know what's going to be done.

Ms. Clarke: Given the recent rains, leaks are not a good thing, for sure.

I'm told that The Forks is part of the renewal corporation for downtown, and so on and so forth. So, part of the system that I'm still learning about which is all good news.

I'm also told that this was raised last year at Estimates, so—but it still rains and, obviously, it's still leaking, so it was referred to management and, at that time, it was told that perhaps it was just condensation on the windows. But, you know, it still is water that doesn't want or need to be there, so it is a maintenance issue.

And, of course, we also know that the Forks is under extensive renovations right now and that it will be addressed within the mandate of the renovations.

Ms. Klassen: Thank you for the answer. I was wondering how many communities are helped by the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative.

Ms. Clarke: To answer that directly, there's approximately 45 communities in that project in the North.

Ms. Klassen: We are caught in a terrible cycle in a lot of remote communities in that we can't build homes—CMHC homes—because it requires to be set up with water and sewer, and we can't hook them up to water and sewer because they're all at capacity. We can't build our own water and sewage treatment plants without help from federal and the provincials. And so we're stuck in that situation.

We do have a lot of people that want to build their own homes, or a lot of business proposal ideas where our people want to build their own homes. But, at the same time, there's no—to get paid—the shelter allowance isn't going to get transferred to them because it states that the section 95—the shelter allowance—has to go to a non-profit, or—you know, there's so much laws and rules that are binding us in that we can't build our own homes on our communities by our own people.

And, so, I'm wondering if—what can be done to address that issue?

Ms. Clarke: I don't know if you were sitting in earlier when the member from The Pas and I were discussing, you know, a lot of the issues facing the North, and I indicated that my role as Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations is a lot about relationships. And a lot of the issues and concerns that you're addressing right now, particular clean water, housing, all these different things—it's going to take a lot of partners to address all these issues, and the federal government, as well. Because the federal government, when it comes to housing and that, is your partner, whether you're in the North or any part of Manitoba.

I worked with the previous government. I sat on a housing round table for, I think, almost three years because of the extreme housing shortages, not just specifically in the northern and remote. That was a key conversation at those—that time. And the deficits, and the different types of housing that are missing in our province. And it is a real concern. The conditions that many families live in—and, I mean, it affects their health.

I know on the First Nations that's within my constituency, we've had house fires where there's been lives lost because of the serious deterioration of housing, and far too many people living in one home and the lack of proper heating systems that ends up causing fires. And lives are lost.

* (16:40)

There's a lot of serious issues and, as I indicated earlier, we hope within the different departments of our government to address these together, and when we're talking about the Yes! North strategies, it's about the overall enhancement of better life for the people in the North. And the indigenous part of this portfolio kind of, I think, in a sort of way, it umbrellas all the issues, and we're going to have to work together. But I hope in my role as the minister for indigenous relations that I can be a good liaison between the different departments and that we can all work together in ensuring that we make some headway on all these different issues and that we can provide a better life, whether it's—and I indicated earlier too, whether it's health, I mean, you know, if you've got poor housing, you ultimately end up with poor health because, I mean, I've heard lots of discussion, and I've seen first-hand the mould, for instance, and these are very unhealthy conditions that can give long-term health issues that ultimately cost more tax dollars for all of us.

So, I mean, it's up to us. It's up to us to start working collaboratively. It's very clear that, you know, we can't expect the indigenous communities to deal with this on their own, but we need the federal partners at the table too. We all need to be there. We need federal, we need municipal, we need provincial, and we need the leaders of our First Nations communities, and we need our municipal leaders. If we're going to make things work right, we have to work together, and that's our responsibility. I'll be at that table.

Ms. Klassen: I appreciate that answer.

I had asked one time about the safety in our northern airports and that, you know, Winnipeg international airport, there might be a chance of a drug-sniffing dog. You know, illegal drugs are not produced in our communities; they come from somewhere, and so we know that they're brought there on planes. It would be—they fuel gang life, crime, poverty; you know, all those issues are exacerbated when there's drugs and alcohol introduced into communities. I'm from a dry reserve, but it still gets in.

Is there a way—has anything been done to address that issue? Can there be drug-sniffing dogs employed at our small 'remort'—the ones—the airports that service our northern communities, such as Perimeter, Northway air, Amik air?

Ms. Clarke: The issues you talk about face all our communities. It's not just the North. It's not just the indigenous, it's not just the fly-in. If we could all close our doors to drugs and gangs, what a wonderful province this would be.

I think, again, as parents, I think, as political leaders, we need to do everything that we can do, and it's going to take a lot because you know what, this drug trade and the gangs are growing strong and they're growing fast, and it's—they're starting with our children at such an early age now. It's—parents have to get on board here, and that's probably one of the—the best information I've got so far in the last eight weeks from two indigenous elders, one in my own office and one in Ottawa, and the one in Ottawa spoke very clearly. It was at the meeting that we had in regards to truth and 'reconciliation' and our missing and murdered women, indigenous women and girls, and we talked—she talked about a lot of different aspects about how we're living our lives now and what we need to do, and she spoke very clearly on children and our responsibility as parents, guardians, grandparents and just citizens in general.

And it's—we are all responsible to keep our children safe, to keep them healthy, and I don't think we can—I don't think a sniffing dog at a few airports—or in the North, is going to fix this problem. This problem's much greater than that.

We have to start protecting our children in our own homes and, you know, educating them. We have to educate the parents. I can't believe, well, yes, I can believe because I was probably one of those naive parents in my day too. You know, we're not aware of what to look for always, and so we're not doing our jobs either. You know, we need more awareness training for parents, young parents that we're—we know when our kids are in trouble. And, you know what? Those kids are very good at masking issues. They're very good at masking problems, and they're very good at deviating as to their whereabouts and who they're hanging about with.

So this is—to me, this is a much bigger issue than just dogs at an airport. It's a huge issue, and one that, again, we're not going to solve in a very short period of time. But we all have a responsibility to protect the people of our community, and more, especially, our own children and grandchildren.

Ms. Klassen: I appreciate the answer.

As a mother of six, I assure you that I understand. I've had three teenagers now; the rest are under—pre-teens. And so, yes, speaking to our children daily and continuously and drilling it into their heads really helps. And so education is a key component of that and if—the more people that we can start targeting, telling, you know.

One idea I had—I know we all have frankings that we're privy to. And, so, what my frankings are going to look like are financial—you know, I'm not going to do the calendar with my family on there. Everybody knows what my family all looks like, so I'm going to utilize that strategically to try and, you know, educate the youth, educate families and, you know, if that's one of the small ways that I can do that, you know, targets everybody, so—in my riding. So I'm hoping to use that.

But my next question has to do with, you know, the exhaustion of the doctors and the nurses in our remote communities. My niece, yesterday, was going to be sent home after a car accident where she was not properly in the car, fell out, and then was subsequently dragged by the vehicle because the person was driving panicked and tried to reach her and ended up vehicle moving backwards.

She's six years old and was at the hospital 'til 3 a.m. Finally, we know she has a fractured pelvis and we're looking at surgery—we're waiting for the orthopedic to tell us what's going to—what the next steps are, but the doctor there was going to send her home with Tylenol. And, you know, my dad urged, you know, this is not her normal painful cry; this is severe. And, so, ended up getting life—on a Lifeflight out here, thank God. And, so, now we know that she's facing this grave injury.

And so, you know, my question is: What can we do to support the people that, you know, love my people enough to come out and help our people out there, the nurses, the doctors? You know, we've got to do something before these people in that—just something. What—have you talked to anybody in this regard? You know, what is the plan?

Ms. Clarke: Your timing's really good. I had a very extensive meeting with four chiefs from the North last night that are very concerned about health care and health-care facilities, and the staffing of the nursing units—the health-care units in the North.

And, again, I will share with you that, having worked with all municipalities in this province, the health-care issues are extensive, and even in my own campaign, in my nice, central, rural, very affluent constituency, that the health-care issues I heard during my campaign horrified me. And there, again, there's a lot of work to be done. There's no doubt about it.

I'm not the Minister of Health. I'm not here to give you health-care answers. I'm speaking on it more of a community role and my support for the indigenous communities, not just in the North but throughout the province of Manitoba. And this situation you talk about is a very serious one, for sure.

And—but I also know health care in our hospitals—I had a brother-in-law in the hospital a few weeks ago that, also, was in a very serious accident. And he's 70 years old. And they were going to send him home, as well. I've had a dad that's been in the hospital many, many, many times in the last few years—very, very critical. And—but we always ensured that somebody stayed with him. And, in your case, too, your family's there. They're protecting that child and looking out for the child's best interest when they can't. But even when you've got an adult that's in care in the hospital, they're not always able to identify what's wrong with them, either.

* (16:50)

And so that's our role as Families, I guess. We're that support that needs to say, you know what? Take another look; there's something wrong here. And we will continue to do that because either the care-people that we care about for sure.

In regards to the health care in the North and, you know, recruiting and retention of doctors or other health-care staff, I was pretty horrified to hear that they've got nurses or doctors that fly in on a Monday morning, get there at 10 o'clock and by 3 o'clock Thursday afternoon, they're gone. And they're in really rural and remote areas. I'm—I was aware of this previously, but the stories I heard last night were pretty concerning, and so that means they have no health care from 3 o'clock Thursday afternoon until again Monday morning. So what do you do in the meantime?

But what was more concerning is these staff are there—and I do not understand how it works. I don't know the other side of the story, but when they get a call after 5 p.m. when they are considered no longer to be on call, they do not—they do not—they do not go and attend to a patient if there's one there even though they are the only source of health care.

Our Minister of Health, without a doubt since taking office a few short weeks ago, has got—I don't know if he could count the number of concerns and complaints, and some of them very critical, that he gets in one day and that he gets every day. I can see the burden in his face for the complaints that he's getting. He has committed to a health-care review. I think it's very necessary, and when there is a health-care review, it won't be just for southern Manitoba; it will be for the whole province.

And I think there's a lot of things that have to be looked at, and hopefully there's a better way of doing things going forward.

Ms. Klassen: Thank you for the answer. So, not knowing which four communities you spoke to—I'm from Island Lake—so my—I know my chiefs want me to ask for some sort of facility, a hospital perhaps, you know, in our area because there's—we're 14,000 strong. And that might be a relatively small number compared to some of the other reserves, in combination, but it would really benefit the people because—cost-effective. It would be cost-effective because how many—like, every hour on the hour, sometimes twice in an hour, we're sending a

medevac out from that region. And so, you do that—over the time you do the accounting, that you do the math on it, you'll realize that, you know what? It would be more beneficial.

So that's my question: Is there any plans—I know—I see—to facilitate, on page 79 here, the active planning and delivery of capital infrastructure projects is listed here. Would you help in planning for a hospital for the Island Lake's area?

Ms. Clarke: Thank you and, of course, the decisions in regards to health-care facilities are up to the Health Minister, but I definitely will be that support that will be there for the people of the North or the indigenous communities.

And another area that you haven't touched on, but that we certainly discussed, and I'm very well aware of, in many parts of Manitoba, not just the North, is the need for dialysis units because the number of dialysis patients throughout this province is growing so fast. There's one lady from my community has to drive to Brandon three times a week, and she can't drive and people have been volunteering. That's only just one person.

At Sandy Bay First Nation in my constituency and they literally have shuttles running every day, all day long with dialysis patients. That's only one community, and I know with the amount of communities that are up north—and that's another thing that was identified last night, was the need for a dialysis unit. The amount of money that is spent transporting patients back and forth for dialysis alone.

So I would hope in this review, and as I've indicated, I'll work with the Minister of Health or what other ministers within our government on issues in regards to the indigenous communities.

Ms. Klassen: Thank you, I appreciate that answer. That was where I was going to go next. My brother recently passed from complications for diabetes and, you know, living in a hotel for nearly three years, that cost alone and feeding him, you know, hotel life was horrible for him and his family completely obliterated any semblance of a family unit and so—but I appreciate you talking about adjusting that issue.

The next question I had—talking about my brother always throws me off.

I had asked about infrastructure, you know, MTS being sold to Bell. I see—a lot of the communities

foresee a lot of great things if we get Internet connectivity up North. One of the things, data mining, you know, we outsource a lot to other nations and we would really like to be given the opportunity to get some of that economic opportunity in our own communities and, you know, be that as opposed to outsourcing.

So I'm wondering if you've heard or if you know if—yet if there's going to be Internet connectivity through Bell for our area.

Ms. Clarke: This is a discussion—an extensive discussion—one of the extensive discussions we've had with our northern communities that we've met with so far. Actually within the first—I think the second day that I was in office, the mayor of Churchill, Michael Spence, was in and we had a lengthy discussion on that, and every other community, not just indigenous communities, but all communities in the North. This is very much a high priority, and I know from an economic development perspective, anyone trying to do business now without the Internet is—you're literally shut out from the rest of the world.

It's not just economic development, again it's with your health care, it's in emergency situations when you, you know, you have massive forest fires in the North for safety reasons. I mean we could make such a long list of all the reasons why it should be and again it's not just northern Manitoba. I live right on 16 Highway, which is a very high traffic area, and in the middle of my community very often there is no cell service or 10 miles down the road there is no cell service.

This is something very clearly that has to be addressed, and I've been a part of a lobbying group for our municipalities that's been lobbying and it is, you know, the federal government as well for Internet services throughout Manitoba. I mean how can Manitoba be competitive in a global market if we don't have, you know, the level of Internet services and everything that we need. That's just on the economic development side of it, but for so many other reasons. We had a fire down in the southeastern part of Manitoba just a few years ago that was critical because they had no communication with the needs that were in that community at the time.

So, without a doubt, a very high priority. I've had that discussion with the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen) and we

are definitely—that is something that we know that in the Yes! North strategy that is a very key component.

Ms. Klassen: I appreciate the answer. Thank you.

The next question I had was in regards to MPI not the thing itself but if we can bring that to our remote communities because I—the only time they come in is when they need some extra funds. They come and hand out licences and they put up the one stop sign on the reserve and then, you know, they charge you an arm and a leg for the test and eventually you get your licence.

But we were hoping that we could get a permanent, you know, office there in the communities because, you know, we want our vehicles registered in case of accidents, such as the one the other day, and, you know, I'm hoping that we will be able to work together to—or if you could give me an answer as to whether or not that's something I have to go to another minister for.

Ms. Clarke: I'll give you an answer. I'm not MPI, so I'm not Crown Services and I'm not health care and I'm not Growth, Enterprise and Trade, but I will—I am trying to answer these questions the best as I can from an indigenous perspective and, you know, what will benefit you the most and I guess the best thing I can say is I will work with these ministers.

* (17:00)

Almost everything that you've brought forward as well as the member from The Pas, these are issues that we will have to work collaboratively on with other members in our department, as well as other members in other portfolios.

But, you know, I heard recently, like, you know, it's a big deal. You can't even get a driver's licence up north. Well, yes, that's a frustration for sure. And I just have to share with you on a—it's not a comical note, but my husband and I, actually, we have an employee from a First Nations community and she refers to her work vehicle and her res vehicle, and, you know, she has this old truck that she drives because they talk about the roads up north and the deplorable situation they're in.

Well, I've been stuck on the roads in Sandy Bay in southern Manitoba on more than one occasion to the point where they literally had to pick my vehicle up and remove it, so I do understand these situations. I've been there; I've done that, and I see why they have the vehicles that they do—one to go off their

properties and one to drive within their properties. It makes good sense. I totally get that.

But as far as, you know, committing to an MPI office in the North, I can't commit that, of course, but I think it's a reasonable proposal and I guess, you know, there will be that opportunity in your larger centres—Flin Flon, The Pas, Dauphin. I also realize it's a long distance to go, so what the realities of that are, I don't think that's probably going to be their No. 1 priority, and I think there's probably things that you'd like to see happen sooner than that, but I realize it's on the list. I'll at least acknowledge that.

Ms. Klassen: I appreciate the answer, and I just want, I guess, more on the record, so I've asked it. If I can prove to my people that I've asked it, then I can tell them where I got to go now. So, yes.

So the next question was insurance for our people. My sister's childhood friend was involved in a workplace accident and was not able to get coverage. His leg was severed and because they weren't educated or they didn't know workplace health and safety existed, the company didn't register for it and so when he got air ambulated out there was no supports for Workplace Safety and Health, and so in building those relations there's a lot of topics that we have to educate—not certain pockets of people; we have to educate, yet again, globally, all the First Nations that there are programs such as Workplace Safety and Health that exist that will be able to help people in managing their life after. Like, he has no insurance. Workplace Safety and Health is not covering him, even though it happened on the job, and so that's one of the ones that—where I want to know what kind of supports or items like this where people aren't aware of programs such—like this, how can you help educate groups?

Ms. Clarke: I thank you for that question. It's a really good one and it's probably only one incident and it's only one area. I think if I've learnt anything in my discussions with communities from the North to date, it's that there is a serious lack of communication, and, you know, there's a lot that can be done that doesn't require big dollars. I think if we start, instead of looking up here always, start looking at the ground level and what we can do, the smaller things that we can do to get started, you know, to say, well, we have to wait 'til there's available funding for big projects or whatever. Well, let's start doing some of the grassroot things, something simple like that; educating, you know, the seminars that will be helpful going forward.

My deputy minister here has a project of his own in mind that I think is an excellent one. He is going to run a seminar in the basement of his building for our caucus and other members within our Chamber on indigenous 101, and you know what? That's where we start, so that you know what? Everybody at our table knows and understands the issue. If we're supposed to go out and, you know, communicate with the Province of Manitoba on these different issues to different groups, different needs, we need to know, we all need to know, we're the leaders. We need to know, we need to understand. So deputy Wavey—Deputy Minister Wavey, here, has committed to getting his staff together and presenting information.

That's where we start. And it's exactly what you're saying. So we do that here, and we do it in your communities. And, you know, I personally don't—there's always costs involved. It doesn't matter what you do, because you've got to have coffee at the very least, you know. But, I mean, you know, it's transportation, it does cost money to go into these communities.

But what's to say that we can't have a session, and it can be, you know, we can pick 10 topics for a day that are information. And you know what, maybe we can't get—the other thing I learned during my campaign process—and there too, I've only got one First Nations community in my constituency, but I've worked with those people for well over 40 years, and the thing that concerned me the most is their lack of trust for government. Not just provincial government, federal government; any government.

And I went to them in good faith. They've known me, they trust me. Good relationships there. Very good friendships there. But because I'm government, that puts up a barrier. But, you know, they've been calling, and they want to come in now, again, to meet with me. And I'm really excited about that.

And we were—we are going to develop a new relationship. And that's what I'm hoping I can do with the communities in the North because the communities in the North—and, I mean, I understand this very clearly because I've worked with the municipalities in the North—they feel segregated too. They feel forgotten about. That's been made very, very clear. On the indigenous side, your issues are different, and we've got another level of government involved.

So we have to approach things differently, but we have to do it collaboratively. And I think things like what Deputy Minister Wavey here has suggested to me is a really good starting point for our government. There is no cost, literally, to doing that, and he's offered to do that. And that can, 'peehaps'—perhaps be a step 1 going—taking that to the next step is to start running seminars on the basics, you know, of how to access and live healthy.

Ms. Klassen: I appreciate the answer and I hope this manual you create will be made available.

I understand the lack of trust because I'm indigenous and I'm in that boat as well because, you know, we've never been represented fairly by any level of government. It's only with Trudeau—I wouldn't have personally ran if I hadn't listened to Trudeau's inspirational speeches. I'd never wanted to broach politics personally in my life before. My background is not political at all. I ran for council once, when I was 18, and that was only because I took—and, sorry if this is—the Caucasian—I'll use the politically safe word—employer on our First Nation to labour court. And so—and I won. And so I got nominated for councillor because I stood up for our people when I was a young teenager.

And so—but, building that bridge to try and gain the trust is very hard no matter where you're coming from, and it's because of the lack of support and the total neglect and isolation that you feel, especially in these northern, remote communities where the statistics are getting worse and worse. And I'm sure you know by now that I'm from the community that was sent body bags in the time of the H1N1 crisis. So, you know, my family came and told me at the university—I didn't know whether or not to laugh or cry because, you know, that's how—that's what we took as, you know, this is how bad our neglect is, getting sent body bags as opposed to the sanitation—the hand stuff—the supplies that are—were needed to combat the H1N1 crisis.

* (17:10)

But getting back to the education aspect of it in that respect for any kind of—you know, we want to tackle these issues, and the key is the education aspect of it all, like, training our people that there is a method of combatting these things and a lot of it starts with prevention. Diabetes, you know, we got to teach our kids how to eat healthy and that's—that went back to my question about the Nutrition North program in those communities because, you know, once they learn at a very young age how to combat

diabetes later in life, we're going to get a lot, that high number of incidences will definitely come down. You know, personally, at my home, sugar is not allowed and it's just because I'm so scared we're so just—Aboriginal people are all predisposed to get diabetes as well as—and at the same time we also can't digest milk. We're largely lactose intolerant and that's just a statistic. That's just what's been in place on us.

But, in educating people regarding these things, I need to know what other subjects have you been broached to educate people of the North?

Ms. Clarke: Well, I think we're all on a learning experience here, and even in our discussions today I can see where the combination of municipal and indigenous is a great journey to be on. It's a new one and although municipalities have always existed and indigenous and northern affairs have always existed, but you know what? There's a lot—we've gone through a lot of years and we have not seen a lot of—things are getting worse. We know things are getting worse. You know that. We—it's obvious.

And you talk about why you're here. That's why I'm here. I worked hard within my own community for many, many years, only eight as a municipal official. But I'm here because I see opportunity and I'm here because I have hope for a future, not just for my community but all of Manitoba—and even beyond Manitoba because we're only one component in Canada.

But when I hear our Premier (Mr. Pallister) talk about a better Manitoba, that's my vision. I have a vision. I've always had a vision. I always have a vision. My visions get pretty lofty sometimes and I guess that's one of the reasons when I was presented that indigenous relations would be part of my portfolio, I viewed that as a huge opportunity to do something better. I don't think we're going to build mountains in a short period of time, but if we start at the grassroots exactly what we've been talking about and address the simple issues—building, building, building and money into big projects. You know, there's certain things that have to happen and, I mean, that's realistic.

But we have to start dealing with the people. We have to start dealing with what affects our people and how it makes them feel and, I mean, that's what I'm hearing. In question period, the questions I get are about how people feel. They're not about the dollars that are going into some big project. It's about people are feeling hurt; they're frustrated; they're confused

in that. So let's fix the emotions. Let's start there. That's what matters, and we have to start by doing that, and it's like you said. It's about education. We have to educate our children. First of all, we have to make sure they've gotten educations because, you know what? They're our future leaders, and your children should have as much potential as any other child in the province to do that.

And, you know, we had a meeting with Paul Martin, the Right Honourable Paul Martin, just a few weeks ago, and he's so excited about the project that he's launched in regards to Aboriginal literacy and starting with the children and they want to do pilot projects in Manitoba. How exciting is that? He's got federal dollars. He's putting in dollars himself and he's got partners that are willing to invest in Manitoba to start working with that. And, then, to go to the Lord Selkirk School yesterday and meet with their principal and their teachers, and what they're doing in their primary grades to educate their children so that they've got a sense of pride going forward, that they want to be in school; they want to stay in school; they want to learn. They want to have hopes for a future, for a great job that pays well and that they can be self-sustaining. That's all any of us have ever wanted, but we've got to provide that for these young children now.

We can't change the past. We can remember the past, and we can learn from the past.

But you know what? What's happened from yesterday, backwards, there's not much about that we can change, and there's a lot that's not right, and there's a lot of people have been hurt, but, you know, we have every opportunity to mould the future and that's our job. We've got to mould that future, but we've got to do it together because, clearly, things aren't working the way they are, so it's time to change.

Ms. Klassen: I appreciate your words. Yes, I'm a firm believer in everything happens for a reason and so learning from the past is the best way to go forward in talking about fixing the emotions of the—there's so many issues around suicide. I met with Chief Jeff from Shamattawa and, you know, the youngest suicide victim in his community was eight years old. And how that child could even fathom that that was the answer. I was just heartbroken to—you know, that—so that now makes two reserves in my constituency, Gods Lake Narrows being the other one where another eight-year-old, and his

10-year-old brother after finding the eight-year-old committed suicide as well.

So these are staggering statistics and I don't want them to only be statistics. I want us to learn from that and address this—the time to address these issues are now. And so my next question is: What is this—what are you going to be doing to target the indigenous suicide issue head on?

Ms. Clarke: I think that's part of this whole package. I mean, you know, we have to start giving our children a reason to live. We hear so much about bullying. Suicides don't just happen in your communities.

We had a 10-year-old suicide in my community; I know all about it. We had other suicides. I mean, these are realistic, the amount of bullying that goes on. You know, it's for a lot of different reasons. In your communities, it's—the issues are different, and I realize that. And the numbers are much greater; I acknowledge that as well.

But we have to start helping our children, to give—we have to give them a reason to live, you know, and, if we're going to stop this from happening, we have to identify what has to change. We have to—those changes have to be made, because I think that's the biggest crisis.

Ms. Klassen: I appreciate the answer.

The next one I had is regarding the—where was it?—education—not education, the recreational aspect—component of it. You know, part of these kids' dreams is to have something to do every day, so it'll take the mind off from the stresses of home because you know, 28 people to a household; that's not a home. That's pretty much a hotel in one room.

And so there's a lot of recreational requests that I get continuously. And so I'm wondering if you or your government has earmarked any funds or—well, I know you earmarked funds, but, if there was a way that we can specifically target some communities so that they can get recreational programming into their communities, and that I can go to chiefs like Jeff and the chief of Gods Lake Narrows, and say, you know what? We're going to help your kids today by giving you this.

Ms. Clarke: There is, of course, provincial funding available for rec facilities and so on and so forth, but in most cases, that comes with giant funding between federal government, provincial government and the communities. I don't know how accessible these are

to the First Nations communities. I—and they're not even always a component of the infrastructure. I know that this is needed in a lot of communities.

* (17:20)

I see from time to time, and I saw one just last week, an individual from Winnipeg here who was actually gathering up musical instruments to take up to one of the northern communities where suicide and—you know, where there was a lot of crisis problems with the youth and the children. And, because of his love of music, he was hoping to, you know, take these instruments there and, you know, something to give them something different to focus on. And those type of humanitarian gestures are huge, even for them to know that one person cares, you know, or, in this case, lots of people cared enough to donate to his project. This is a really good thing.

I've just been given information here in regards to the Northern Youth Empowerment Initiative, and \$100,000 provides support for new and ongoing community-based, youth-focused initiatives by reducing financial barriers to participation in activities that build self-esteem and provide opportunities for growth, personal growth, and achievement. And six projects were funded in 2015 to 2016, for a total of \$90,342.

I'll just add to that, there's a northern water safety program, which is important, of course, too—\$225,000. This program is delivered by the Lifesaving Society of Manitoba branch. The success of the program has led to the consolidation, responsibility and funding for provincial water safety initiatives through two joint agreements administered by Health, Seniors and living—Active Living. This includes a funding agreement with the Manitoba Coalition for Safer Waters and a funding agreement with the Lifesaving Society.

In 2015, the Northern Youth Empowerment Initiative—or safety program visited 33 communities, which is—seems quite good. And it provided the following: 723 young children and youth participated in to swim to survive swimming lessons; 345 individuals received emergency first aid, CPR and AED training; 212 people graduated from the boat operators accredited training program; and a newly introduced program for 2015, it's called Within Arms' Reach and Water Smart for kids attracted over 200 participants. So, since the program's inception in 2005, 140 communities have been visited by this program, so that has taken place.

And on this particular report it shows that there's an allocation of \$165,000 for Manitoba Aboriginal sport and recreation to the council.

And the Aboriginal development program provides core operating grants to eight Aboriginal organizations and tripartite funding to two Aboriginal organizations. Core operating grants are dispersed on a quarterly basis, and they're based on the following prerequisites: provision of a corporate budget identifying all funding sources and anticipated expenditures for the current year, and a business plan which includes attributable, measurable and directly targeted outcomes; provision of a consolidated audited financial report for the same—or, pardon me—for the previous fiscal year, along with an outcome report for the same period.

Ms. Klassen: Thank you for that.

I was going to start taking the statistics, but then I realized it'll be on Hansard.

Yes, so I just wanted to close by thanking for—thank you for all the answers and thanking, Madam Chair, for chairing.

One of the ways that I do help CFS children, and I was going to encourage all your staff to do the same thing, as well, is to reach out to any indigenous child you come across, give them a smile. That goes a long way in what they're contemplating that day, because, you know, the group of girls I mentor in Stonybrook Middle School at—in Steinbach, you know, I see it in their faces, they're just so encouraged and so inspired that there is, you know, leadership representing them in the House because I always—and that's why I always speak up on CFS issues, because Steinbach, unfortunately, has a high number of kids in care from the surrounding communities and so, you know, providing a smile to any Aboriginal child you see, it inspires them in ways you can never imagine.

Because I—myself, was inspired that way as a young child. My mentor was a mathematician that happened to want to come to a remote community just to offer inspiration. And he came yearly to the—my reserve, just to inspire us, and that's all it took for a great number of us to be inspired to be mathematicians, and follow in his footsteps. And so I would encourage—if you could pass that message along, I would appreciate that.

Ms. Clarke: I'd also just like to thank you for your respectful but also very informative questions. These are the kind of dialogues we should be having and,

you know, it's certainly going to help me in my journey learning more about the indigenous community but, more especially, the indigenous people. Because it is about the people and it is about the emotions and I know exactly what you're saying about how you treat one child.

You know, it does make a difference. It's a huge influence, and it shouldn't matter who's child it is, what child it is. And especially—you know, people with disabilities. Just driving over to the North End yesterday, and I see the number of people in wheelchairs—many, many, many people in wheelchairs at the North End. You don't see that down here.

And I mean, everybody should walk that path. And there needs to be a lot more compassion, going forward. And when we start to do that as individuals—but we have to lead by example. We have to be the leaders. And I would really look forward to coming to Steinbach someday if you have the time to come to that school, that would be an education for me.

So thank you very much.

Ms. Lathlin: I have a couple more questions before I go for my lengthy drive to The Pas tonight.

One, I just wanted to, like, specifically from my constituency and in regards to Aboriginal and treaty rights, I've been in discussions with Opaskwayak Cree Nation fishermen, Opaskwayak Cree Nation trappers, and I believe they're still waiting to hear from Manitoba Hydro, and these conversations were led by the former minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

And I just wanted to know: What is your position, because I recall having a direct conversation with a CEO of Manitoba Hydro to come back to the table and renegotiate regarding an agreement—well, not really an agreement, it hasn't been agreed upon by our First Nations, but what is your position as an advocate for our Aboriginal treaty rights in respect to our fishing and our fishers and trappers association and, in fact, you know, there's a few of those associations in my constituency.

Ms. Clarke: Thanks for that question. I don't know the discussions that took place and agreements that you're talking about. I have no knowledge of that. And people that were perhaps in those positions previously, maybe aren't even there anymore. So I don't have any background on that.

In regards to my position with—currently, with these associations, and so on and so forth, I would look very forward to meeting with them and learning and understanding, you know, what their concerns are, if they have concerns, recommendations for—you know, if there's issues that they have and they have good information of how things could be changed to be better. Those decisions would not fall within my department, but from that relationship part of my portfolio, I'd definitely be willing to meet with them.

And I've never caught a fish in my life, but that doesn't mean that I can't learn to understand these issues. It's part of the position and I'm more than willing to talk to these people.

* (17:30)

Ms. Lathlin: Seems the time has just flown by. I think it was last summer, I participated with the freedom walk that we had that started here at the back of the legislative. I was pretty honoured to have my daughters here with me to participate, to fully engage them as to why we're here and fighting for people's rights. I'm just curious as to where are we with the government on I believe there was commitments made towards improving that First Nation's life in many ways, and I was just wondering can you provide us the current status as to where we are with the government and, you know, the commitment that was made by the former government and what are your—the status if you will.

Ms. Clarke: Can I just have clarification in regards to the—you're referring to the Freedom Walk?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Ms. Clarke: And what was the—

An Honourable Member: For their road.

Ms. Clarke: For which—

An Honourable Member: For Shoal Lake # 39.

Ms. Clarke: Shoal Lake, okay. Thanks for your clarification.

Yes, the road—the construction of the road as such, of course, is under the Department of Infrastructure, and I know you've heard that in question period. It has been a topic of the—topic of discussion, and the question also was raised, and I think that's probably where you're going with this now, what about the people and the people that this affects and the changes that are taking place and what's happened in the past.

I'm actually going to be up in that area on Monday. I'm meeting with these people, so that's my next opportunity to meet with them, listen to what they have to say and, as I've indicated, I feel my position right now is to listen. I don't have the answers, but I will be listening to them, and I will be going up to that area on Monday.

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you very much for everyone's time here today for participating and great discussions, good questions, good answers. I'd just like to say I have to leave early and, again, I thank you for this opportunity to ask questions on behalf of Indigenous and Municipal Relations.

Ms. Clarke: Okay, just a closing comment for myself too.

As I indicated, at the beginning of this process today, you know, it's been a great learning experience for me. This is just the beginning. We have a long journey ahead, and I look forward to working with you on that journey, because I can't do it myself, even with all the people I've got on my staff, this is a journey where we have to do it together, respectfully and with a lot of communication. And our whole province and especially our northern communities and your indigenous communities will benefit by us doing a good job on their behalf. So I'll make every effort to do that on your behalf as well.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I come from an eastern community. I think the first question I should ask about the taxi industry, because the taxi industry is the bread and butter of eastern community. And many people own taxis or they are drivers, and they are quite nervous about Uber—may come and may not come because Premier (Mr. Pallister), in a separate meeting, promised that it won't be allowed to come and then, in a news release, at one time, Premier said, yes, anybody—they will get a fair chance.

So I would say about—on the market when somebody buys a taxi permit, it costs about \$400,000; sometimes lower, sometimes higher. It was, at one time, one-fifty twenty-five, because people were a little bit nervous with the Uber situation, so it had gone down.

And I would ask the minister what she is going to do with their situation because people—some people sold their property. Back in their old country, they brought money over there; they spent it; and it's not their own fault that a permit price is that much. It

was a government problem in the beginning. They let it go from \$25,000 to slowly up and slowly up and slowly up.

So, to be fair with the taxi owners, what the minister is going to do?

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for your question, and we have discussed this earlier in this process, but just for your benefit because you weren't here at the time, there is a review going on right now, at this time, of the Taxicab Board. It's being done by Meyers Norris Penny, and they have a contract to undertake a comprehensive review of Winnipeg's taxicab service industry, and this will help guide future policy decisions. And it will most certainly address a lot of the concerns that you're just bringing forward right now.

Now there was an initial consultation process and it took place earlier this year in January. Now the results of this study, they're expected to be complete by later this year, so it shouldn't be too long until we hear back on this study and, hopefully, some of those questions that you're asking will be addressed in that.

Mr. Saran: Well, I'm aware about this study going on. I'm aware about that, but what I am worried about and, during this process it may not be the owners [*inaudible*] during that process, I hope. There should be some reasonable solution which this study may not look at it. The solution is that if somebody—sometimes the government doesn't like to spend money, but I hope the minister may like to make money, and my suggestion is that I would ask whether the minister would agree or not, my solution is that there is a \$400,000, say, going on price from the market, and some people coming behind the scene, they are driving a cab and they are not paying a single penny, and it's hurting that industry right now.

To me, to be fair with everybody, let us say the ongoing market price is \$400,000. Either somebody or Uber can come—or any other community, whatever—they can come; they can either buy from the market for \$400,000 a permit or they can go to the taxi board. If we can make some change, they can go to the taxi board, buy a permit from the Taxi Board.

So what will happen, after a year or so, then, I think we can again check the price and that will—maybe 350, maybe 450, depend upon. Again, either they can buy from the market or they can go to the taxi board and buy their permit, and that way,

nobody will have a free ride, because now many people are getting a free ride. They've made some kind of contract that this and this is so, and they want to have the ride every day and therefore I need another four vans; I need this and that, just to make money from zero to \$400,000. That's what it is.

* (17:40)

So, to be fair, I would ask, there should be fair price. Either they can buy from Taxi Board, or they can buy from the market. And that way, say, hypothetically, there's 100 taxis are over there, and the people are going to buy another 100 in the taxis. And maybe I think how much do they want to make, maybe, for—from government, may make \$40 million.

So the—would the minister agree in that line of solution?

Ms. Clarke: I thank you for your question, and we are aware that there are many issues out there, and, more specifically, the ones that you've outlined here today.

The industry has raised this proposal, and it will be considered as part of the study, this information. The industry was consulted first and—as part of this process. So they have had input already into this review, as such. So that information, similar to yours, is part of the study and will be part of the review.

Mr. Saran: I'm aware of that they were consulted, but I'm—but they're kind of nervous since the election because there's not clear-cut understanding from PC government whether they let Uber come in or not. Sometimes they say they won't; other times they say they will. So they are nervous about that.

And what is the stand on Uber situation?

Ms. Clarke: The reason for the study is to get a very broad perspective, and to bring this information forward. And, by doing so, then that gives us an opportunity to form a new policy, or to form policy.

This government has not taken a stand on anything, and that's why we have an 'independent' company, Meyers Norris Penny, doing this. So that they can bring all this information forward. And then a policy will be formed after that so that we can move forward and that, hopefully, then, there's not room for concerns going forward.

Mr. Saran: I'm also concerned about the definition of ride sharing. Ride sharing, to me, if students are

going to university, one student will pick up the other students, and they will share the cost or maybe they might give \$2 or something like that each. So that's ride sharing. And, similarly, if workers are going to work, one worker will pick up another. But the ride sharing is being used very loosely now because ride sharing means if I pick up somebody and make money, drop at the University of Manitoba, come back, although I'm not a student there, still that's ride sharing. So to me, we have to—I ask the minister to tighten that definition. The definition only will be where a person is going himself in that place and also part of that activity, that's ride sharing. If not, that should not be ride sharing. So have to change that in the act wherever that clause is, the regulation, that have to be changed.

But maybe the minister can answer both questions then. The other thing I think: Some drivers are—the taxi industry had been under attack because they are asking money—to community to pay in advance, but they're not asking the other ones. So, in that case, I thought about the solution.

I used to work with the government services and I take my truck at nighttime, and I would fill up the gas. First, they will ask to pay money, and then they will ask—they will put pump on and then I will be able to do that. And to treat everybody equally, I think what we should do, we should ask, after a certain time, anybody, any fare who is being picked up, they should pay some amount in advance, depending upon how long the distance they—the distance, and—or maybe some minimum amount in advance. And say 12 o'clock until 5 or 6 o'clock; in winter maybe from 7 o'clock until—in the morning, 6 o'clock, something like that.

In that way that part where the taxi industry being accused—discriminating a particular group, but not asking the other. So I think, in my thinking, that will be a better solution. What the minister think about that?

Ms. Clarke: Yes, in regards to your question, it's interesting when you talk about ride sharing, I think ride sharing has been going on forever. We've done that with work and school forever as a—it's all we could afford, basically, and in some cases, in—over the years.

But part of this review is looking at the regulations and looking at the policies in other jurisdictions so that we know everything that we're dealing with in regards to terminologies, and everything that you're asking here, that is part of this

study. We will, you know, take this proposal under consideration.

But, you, as an individual, also have this opportunity to be a part of this review. There will be public consultations and, you, as an MLA or as an individual, people within your community, everyone will have an opportunity to be a part of this review, and I would urge you to do so and, you know, people within your constituency or friends. You know, this is the reason for the review: to get all the input from all the different perspectives that's possible. So it's in our best interest to get as much information as possible.

* (17:50)

Mr. Saran: While I don't know I will be available to participate in that, but I don't know how I will approach them or someday—or somebody who will—is doing study. They will approach me. I will be willing to discuss with them—I will discuss with the minister's department. Whatever the avenue we have, I will be willing to that.

But now I will go to a different topic, and I know minister's—for municipal minister and, before that, it will—used to be Local Government. And, under Local Government, that they used to talk to the City and discuss with the—each of their—there is some project within the city's—the city of Winnipeg. And I would ask the minister, if she can, talk to the City, put the Leila Avenue, in The Maples, on a priority list, because Leila Avenue has only two lanes, and it's an emergency route from Seven Oaks to the—their vicinity.

So sometimes there are cars parked over there after there is an emergency, and there's not an easy way to go through it. So I think that has been left that way for a long time. I am pushing for it. And, a few times, I did myself—talk to the councillor, and then there was other roads in that area to be done, so some you get, some you don't get. Because Keewatin was to be twinned, so they are doing that. Pilot orders to be—make better than what it was—used to be.

So—but, there is quite a demand from the—that area's residents, like, that Leila Avenue be twinned. And to twin it is because the province put 50 per cent of share, maybe one-third depends upon the federal government.

So I will request the minister to lobby on their side, because, normally, most of the work is being done in the south. It does not no matter which the government is. That's because city councillor and

their lobby group, who are well educated, who have lots of time, but, on the north side, people are working people. They don't have that time to lobby. And so, if we don't treat south and north equally, then who will?

I think I would ask the minister to convince the province—city counterpart to come up with some solution.

Ms. Clarke: I understand your frustrations. I think all of us within our neighbourhoods or constituencies or municipalities, we all have those frustrations. We want to look after the people in our area and give them the best services possible.

This is, however, very clearly, a city council issue, not a provincial issue. And I understand when you're saying, you know, within the roads there is—provincial dollars go in, and that's how funding works for our infrastructure projects. And it's a good thing, because the City can't possibly afford all this on their own and the Province can't afford it all on their own.

I did have a meeting with Mayor Bowman already, and I'm sure we'll have many more. And we discussed a great lengths projects within the city that are a priority, but, of course, they're the bigger projects that require much larger funding and actually require the input and the—of the Province for that process. But, as far as individual community and road projects, we really feel it's up to the City to identify their own issues and to deal with them.

That's why they have a city council to work with them, and it probably wouldn't be really appropriate for me to discuss with the mayor which roads they should be fixing first and, you know, highlighting that one area of the city was more important or not. So I think the mayor and I will probably keep our discussions to the funding and those types of issues.

Mr. Saran: I think that I don't have that much time, but I have so many issues. And tomorrow I will be—as a critic, I will be dealing the other side.

So there is another issue. It's secondary suite or granny suite. And secondary suite, what we were doing under the Housing department, now that has disappeared, we used to do, give the pay, \$35,000 maximum—50 per cent of the total cost, \$35,000 maximum forgivable loan, so people were able to build granny suites or secondary suites. Either they can rent it out, or they can—their parents can stay there, because in these communities, new immigrant communities, especially Filipino community, East

Indian community, people want to—three generations want to stay in the same roof. But, under the new cultural influence, they also want to, and the kids want to, stay separate from them. So, to keep them close and keep them separate, we come up with this solution.

So I would—but the problem is that the city's bylaw, zoning bylaw, were so much tied, so it was not working well. So I talked to the Mayor Bowman, and he also sent Jenny Gerbasi, the councillor, and we have a kind of understanding—our department and the city department, they will talk to each of them.

So, after that election came and for right now, what is happening? So I hope, because the minister will be talking more likely to the mayor, and if they can advise that to me. If my son and daughter, they can stay in the basement—we don't have separate families, we don't have, like, a parents' isolation, whatever they are asking—why, then, to build that granny suite? And now they are asking you have to have a furnace and you have to have fire protection. Sure, you can have alarm, but they increased costs up to such amount that people are not buying it.

So I hope that whenever, keeping the cultures in mind, new cultures, and keeping that in mind, I hope the minister will talk to the mayor and remind him that's what has been discussed before.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for your comments. And I appreciate everything you're saying.

However, that is up to the Minister of Families in regards to housing, so that's a conversation that would have to take place between him and Mayor Bowman going forward.

Mr. Saran: I understand, but, most likely, the municipal minister will be more likely talking to the mayor.

But there's another question. The other question is we used to have a grant for Winnipeg infrastructure, so to help the small projects they will put some amount and government will put some amount, or it could be absolute \$10,000, \$20,000, does not matter, up to maximum of \$50,000.

Is that—those funds are still available, or has it been cut or stopped or eliminated? What is happening?

Ms. Clarke: There is still funding available for communities on local projects. It's called Community Places. Those grants were just awarded a week ago, and they will be going out. There's within the city of

Winnipeg as a whole, as well as all of, throughout all of Manitoba. So those funds are available annually, just one intake per year. So, for 2016, that funding is over.

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

FAMILIES

* (14:40)

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

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

For the information of all members, today we will be filming some footage for our video series Inside the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. Our camera operator will be working in this section of supply at some point this afternoon. Wonderful.

* (14:40)

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): What I could do is there were some questions asked about salaries and salary ranges that I do have that information now. So I thought what I could do is read it on the record as per the member's request.

The first one—and I believe the question was about the salaries and then also the range of salaries, and I think the—was it also the—*[interjection]*—classification, right.

Okay, I'm going to—if I pronounce names wrong, please don't give me a dirty look and kick me under the table here. But, anyways, for—under the Administrative and Finance division, Angie Bruce, classification is EX2, and her salary range is from 109 to 133 thousand, three five five. And the total salary is \$130,400.

Agency Accountability and Community Initiatives Executive Director Lissa Donner, it's XM3; the range is from \$94,830 to \$115,540. And the current salary is \$112,400.

Finance and administration services, Wayne Pestun, the salary—the classification is F17; and the range goes from \$75,331 through to \$103,001. And the salary right now is \$102,700.

The next one is for project manager in information services, Sherry Zajac. XM1 is the classification, and the salary band range is from \$94,830 to \$115,540. And the current salary is \$112,500.

The next person is for the comptroller, who's Kris Piche. And the range is from 79,266—two sixty-five, rather—to \$99,394. And current salary is \$88,800. *[interjection]* And this—and the classification, thank you, is P10.

Final one is same thing, comptroller, for Tina Choy-Pohl, and the salary—or rather the classification is P10 and salary range goes from \$79,265 to \$99,994, and the current salary is \$88,400.

Next division, for community services delivery systems, and—do you just want the names, I guess it is, the names and the salary bands?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Sorry, can you repeat the question?

Mr. Fielding: You just asked for the names and the classifications and the salary range, I guess, is that right?

Ms. Fontaine: That's right.

Mr. Fielding: There's a vacant position in the Adult Disability Services, executive director. The classification is XM3. The bottom—or the salary range is \$94,830 to \$115,540. And the current salary is \$114,800.

Cees deVries, and the classification is P10 and the salary range goes from \$79,265 to \$99,994. Current salary is \$99,400. And that, of course, is from the Strategic Planning and Program Support.

In Rural and Northern Services, the executive director, Daniel Knight, the classification is XM3; salary band goes from \$94,830 to \$115,540. Current salary is a hundred and fifteen—\$113,000, sorry.

The next one is for Winnipeg Services, executive director of Winnipeg Services, Ruth Loepky. And salary band is—or rather the classification is XM3 and the salary range goes from \$94,830 to \$115,514. And the current salary is \$112,100.

Provincial Services, director of provincial services, Esther Kiernan. The classification is P10, and the salary range goes from \$79,265 to \$99,994, and the current salary is \$99,400.

Next one is for the Manitoba development centre, the chief executive officer, and it's Tom—is it Sidebottom—Sidebottom, yes—and the classification is XM3. The salary range goes from \$94,830 to \$115,540 and the current salary is \$115,200.

Winnipeg Child and Family Services executive director Darlene—is it Penrose? XM3 is the classification and it goes from \$94,830 to \$115,540 and the current salary is \$108,800—*[interjection]*—Daphne, sorry, I apologize. I—reading too much here.

The next one is from employment income assistance, acting executive director Catherine Gates, and the category is a PCO classification. The salary band is from \$72,891 to \$99,218—Brad?—at a current salary at \$97,000 exactly.

The next one is for community engagement and corporate support services, and Assistant Deputy Minister Jennifer Rattray, and the classification is EX2, salary range goes from \$109,355 to \$133,356, and the current salary is \$130,000.

Corporate services and administration, Acting Executive Director Michelle Stephen-Wiens, and the job classification is SP6. It goes from \$75,142 to \$93,261, and the current salary is \$92,600. The next one is for indigenous initiatives and that position is vacant right now. It is categorized as a PCO and the salary band is from \$72,891 to \$92,270 and the current allotted salary is \$93,700. That's what it would come in at.

The next one is the fair practice officer, and that's Cheryl Roby and the classification is XO3. The salary band goes from \$55,113 to \$70,187 and the current salary is \$57,800.

The next one is for Children's disability Services and Family Violence Prevention. The executive director is Tracy Moore and the salary classification is P10. It goes from \$79,265 to \$99,994; current salary is \$99,500.

The next one is office of Vulnerable Persons' Commissioner JoAnne—is it Rennick?—*[interjection]*—Reinsch, okay. The classification is XM2, the salary band goes from \$92,464 to \$111,549.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable minister's time has expired.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm going to ask for the minister to continue, but I'm going to ask if the minister can speak up. Because I actually am having a really hard time hearing you, and so more specifically, I think

I've missed a couple of things because I just cannot hear you. So I'm going to ask again for Ms. Rattray—or Mrs. Rattray's salary, and I'm sorry, but if you can advise whether or not you had given the Assistant Deputy Minister Michelle Dubik's salary, because I—

An Honourable Member: Not yet.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay.

Mr. Fielding: Jennifer Rattray, who is assistant deputy minister for Community Engagement and Corporate Services division, EX2, and current salary is \$130,000.

Just continuing on our pathway here, early learning and child care, the director's role Margaret—I'm saying the name wrong. Is it Finnik? *[interjection]* Ferniuk, okay. Salary band is XM2, and the band goes from \$91,464 to \$111,549. Current salary is \$108,700. Legislative and strategic policy, the director Heidi Wurmman. P10 is the classification. The salary band goes from \$79,265 to \$99,994 and the current salary is \$86,200.

* (14:50)

Social Services Appeal Board, the director, which is Heather Hamelin, P6. The salary band goes from \$65,345 to \$80,834 and the current salary is \$76,500.

Disability Issues Office, Yutta Fricke, her salary band is XM2 and the salary goes from—in terms of the range, it goes from \$91,464 to \$111,549 and the current salary is \$103,400.

Right. Michelle Dubik as well, and that's assistant deputy minister, and her brand is EX2. The salary range goes from \$109,335 to \$133,356 and the current salary is \$130,100.

Okay, the final listing is for Child and Family Services, the Assistant Deputy Minister Diane Kelly. Diane is categorized as EX3. The salary band goes from \$113,271 to \$138,444 and her current salary is \$132,200.

Indigenous Child Welfare Development, Tracey Arnold. Categorization, once again—job classification is P10 and salary band goes from \$79,265 to \$99,994 and the current salary is \$89,400.

Child and Family Services, acting executive director. This is a vacant position, and the categories—or the classification is XM3 and the band—the salary range goes from \$94,830 to \$115,540 and current—the current estimate is \$107,800.

And the final person is from Strategic Initiatives, Acting Executive Director Rhonda Warren, and the classification band is XM3. It goes from \$94,830 through to \$115,540, and they're currently making \$104,900.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that. I noticed in this that there's a lot of acting positions and a lot of vacant positions, and so can the minister share what the plan is for these positions?

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

What I will do is, as our staff is putting together some notes for me, I will go through each of the divisions first, if possible.

In terms of Child and Family Services division, there is a number of people that have either retired, and that's Ben Van Haute. That position is vacant and it will be refilled. Daphne Penrose moved to the Winnipeg Child and Family Services; that is currently vacant, and I believe that is being filled as well. Some staff have been 'sequoned' to other positions, including Brian Ridd who has gone to the general authority. And there is a most recent position where someone has retired. I believe that was June 8th of this year, just in the last few weeks.

And those are for Child and Family Services, the key people, I guess, in terms of the vacancies.

Ms. Fontaine: What is the timeline that the department is looking at in respect of filling these positions or making, and I'm not sure if the positions that are currently in acting, if they're just going to be—if the idea is just to move them into permanent positions. But what are—what's the time frame on all of this?

* (15:00)

Mr. Fielding: All positions will be posted once classified, and what we will do, just to the member is—we're working on the other information of the different departments, so I'm not sure if you want to give us some time right now to do that and we'll respond back.

Ms. Fontaine: So, when the information is available, so we can just get going with some of the questions as well, I would appreciate that, but also, in the interest of time, I had wanted to go through, actually, each and every one of the positions just to get a better sense of what those positions do. But, actually, I'm seeing that with the amount of time that the minister is taking per question that we probably

wouldn't even get through this for the next couple weeks.

So, what I'm going to suggest, or what I'm going to request, is if it's possible to get job descriptions for each of the positions, just so that I can have a better sense of what everybody does.

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

First, in terms of the first—the acting exec director, Tracy Moore, for the Children's disABILITY Services, she has moved into a new role that's combined, that looks at the family violence program, and the acting executive director position is going to be filled, and her acting status can be made—*[interjection]*—removed, yes, from the position.

The second response is for the acting executive director for Michelle Stephen-Wiens, and this individual has since moved to the CO of the MDC. Sorry, the person that was in ED job. Yes, the person that was in ED job has moved on to the Manitoba Development Centre.

The third person—or third category or position is the director of indigenous—is that a word?—affairs, I guess—initiatives. Right, and it's a vacant position as it's been newly created, and the commission has just come back from classification and it's intent to be filled through open competition.

Ms. Fontaine: So, just to ask one more time, if it's possible just to get all of the job descriptions for everyone and again the intent is just so that I can get a better sense of all the different components and all the different realms that—of work that people do.

Mr. Fielding: We are working on the job descriptions as we speak, and so if we're able to provide that information today, we definitely will.

Just a few other positions you had mentioned about the acting position, Provincial Services. Brian Malkowich has moved to a new job which will be posted. Adult Disabilities, there's a new position which, of course, will be posted as well. Strategic Planning, program director, it also a new position and the WCFS CEO—the CEO person is currently on leave and will move into the post. And Winnipeg, in terms of ED services, Michelle Dubik accepted the ADM position, so that role of course will be posted. And the Rural Northern Services executive director, Debbie Besant, moved to the general authority and that job will be posted as well.

Ms. Fontaine: Just for the purposes for—I understand that the staff are going to be today, so I mean I don't need those job descriptions right this very minute or today, but at some point, perhaps this week. Just so that there's enough time to kind of gather all that information, that would be much, much appreciated.

So I'd like to ask the minister if he could explain for clarification which departments of the former government were amalgamated and how were they amalgamated with the Department of Families.

* (15:10)

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

You're absolutely right. There was a reorganization of the Department of Families. In terms of the changes, the name of the Family Services department was changed to Families. At no cost to taxpayers, I might add.

The Department of Families is really committed to improving the circumstances of families with children, recognizes that families often face difficult and interrelated social and economic challenges in caring for and providing for their families. This is why we've chosen to add the responsibilities of employment and income assistance programs, and for the Manitoba housing and rehabilitation corporation to the Department of Families to improve and strengthen the social service delivery by bringing together, really, a full range of services, social service programs, policies, service delivery and supports for families.

In terms of the Employment and Income Assistance Program transferring to the Department of Families, we think it does make sense. There's a suitable fit. The transfer of Employment and Income Assistance Program to Manitoba Families brings policy and service delivery for income supports together, really, under one department. And they were two separate departments previously, which created some inefficiencies, I'd say.

We—Employment and Income Assistance has many important connections with other programs within Manitoba Families. Some examples might be things like housing, early learning and child care and the community living disability service programming. So bringing them together under one department helps to achieve co-ordination, policies and services, for low-income Manitobans.

And in terms of the Manitoba Housing, you know, providing safe, secure and—you know, secure

housing, it's really fundamental to the part of approaching addressing poverty. Housing really provides a stable base for Manitobans living in low- or medium-income households who required access to other services in support of preventative services. Housing facilitates important outcomes in many other areas and plays, really, a central—I'd call critical—role in the successful achievement of community, economic and social development initiatives.

And so that's some of the reasons and rationales why departments were merged together. We as a government also feel strongly that having over 19 ministers to administer government was, in our opinions, was too high. And a part of this process—what we're actually able to accomplish over a four-year period—not just looking at the one year out—is the fact that we should be able to save taxpayers in the neighbourhood of \$16 million over that four-year time period.

So we truly think that, you know, whether you're able to save \$4 million a year or whether it's \$16 million over four years, that this is money that could go towards programming and services. And that, of course, was something that was done, of course, within this year, where you saw the budget increase in the neighbourhood of 176—\$175 million for the department. Included a number of different factions of—we can go through, I guess, in a more fuller sense, through the course of these Estimates.

Ms. Fontaine: Can you advise in these—in respect of the \$4 million that you're—you are advising is savings, can you advise if any of the \$4 million went directly to Families, and if so, where did it go?

*(15:20)

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for the question. And we're absolutely excited that the money can be invested in an area that we think makes a lot of sense.

The Department of Families saw about a \$175-million increase in their budget this year. That's—it's consistent with the need that's out there, and we think that money is being spent in the right directions. I think the question talked about can we point out where there's specific benefit in this budget. And I'll go through some numbers and then I'll get into the topic of the minister's salaries as well as executive salaries. And I'll kind of put in context of where we have been in the past versus where we are in the future.

So, once again, the overall increase is about \$175 million, which really represents about a 10 per cent increase in terms of year over year. I believe it's 6 per cent if you look at the adjusted number. And the adjusted number is, essentially, you know, correct me if I'm wrong, but it's the number throughout the year, if there's overexpenditures that comes through the treasury and through Cabinet, where you appropriate additional money that's there.

So, to answer the member's question, in terms of the benefits, we saw this year about a 49.6—well, 49,696,000 or a 14.4 per cent increase in community living and disability services, and that consists of a number of factors: \$19-million increase for the 2015-16 base adjustment, reflecting 2016 projections; over a \$10-million increase and—in terms of the client load that's there. Seventeen million dollars is made up of that number, which increases the projections on the total volume. So it's really about volume and price, I guess, if you will.

We also looked at the employment and income assurance program. And this is a program, that, you know, our new government was very proud of in opposition, we really pushed hard on the current government of the day, the previous government, to increase the Rent Assist program, and the Rent Assist program is extremely important. And what that did—it brought up the medium average of people living in, I guess, in private dwellings in terms of what the medium average would be—I guess the monies that they would receive. And this is something that was done at the very end of the last administration. I believe it was passed in December.

So what this budget actually does, it increases that amount by over 10 per cent, in fact a 10.1 per cent increase in the Employment and Income Assistance rental program. It represents a close to a \$50-million increase or just over a \$50-million increase from last year. We think that's important. That was based on—last year, there was a—kind of a per capita—or when they—made the changes throughout the year, it's based on a full-year supplement, and we were extremely happy that we were able to add more money to the budget this year that looked to bring up that average level. It's based on federal numbers, I guess, if you go through CMHC, I believe, where they identify the numbers.

Also included with \$175-million increase is the Community Engagement and Corporate Services. And we're happy that you could see about a

\$7.5-million increase—or about 3.5 per cent—in terms of some of these important areas.

Some other areas to mention just right off the bat is Early Learning and Child Care. You saw about a \$6.4-million increase, which represents about 4.1 per cent increase. And those were pretty good numbers. You know, I looked back and forth in terms of the numbers, and there seemed to be kind of a scale where you—it would seem to go up in years—I think 2011, you saw an increase and 2015, there was an increase. So we're happy that we're able to increase the money.

Child and Family Services, this is an area that I think everyone agrees is extremely important. We know that the amount of kids in care is unacceptable and we need to make some changes and enhance things. And I know the member opposite is passionate about that. I know the member from River Heights talks a lot about that in his caucus and lots of questions, so I know they're passionate about this issue. And so we saw about a \$20 million—just over 20 million, \$874-million increase in that budget. And this is money that we truly think is money well spent. Protecting our children is 'vital.' It's critical to—you know, it's fundamental, really, to what we're here in government. I know the member from Dawson Trail, you know, is passionate about caring for kids and in a whole big—in a—you know, kind of lived his life in that way. So we saw about a 4 per cent, 4 and a half per cent increase in terms of that budget.

There's also increases in terms of the housing budget. And the housing budget, actually, interestingly enough, went up by close to \$45 million in this budget—\$45,911,000, and—which represents a close to 56 per cent increase.

So I guess my point with this is we think that there's been a lot of money invested and we think the money will serve children and youth a lot better.

The member did also raise the fact, in terms of some salaries, and what this government was extremely proud of the fact that reducing the amount of ministers in particular, as I mentioned earlier, say is upwards of \$16 million over a four-year period, close to \$4 million annually, and this individual department, because you did have amalgamations of departments, you actually saw quite a substantial reduction in terms of the numbers, where I believe the ministers' salaries—if you look at the ministers' salaries, it substantially went down, I believe to the tune of 31 per cent.

So we're actually saving, as a government, 31 per cent on the money that we paid out to the politicians in salaries. That's important, and that was because of realignment, you know, changing course, I guess, if you will, and reducing the amount of ministers that were part of it, and we're able to kind of put that money back into the programming, which we think is important.

In terms of the executive support, which is important because you have some good people behind you all the time supporting you in these—you know, as you're a minister, or you're a member—wherever you're a member, the salaries have substantially dropped as well.

So we're actually saving this government with our new budget and reducing the amount of ministers and staff by upwards of \$179,000 just from last year alone.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable minister's time has expired.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm sorry. I didn't—if the minister can just—I didn't catch the last piece and, again, I'm going to—either I'm going deaf or there's lots of noise in here, so I'm going to ask if you could just speak a little bit louder, or I can come sit next to you. But if the minister wouldn't mind just finishing off on the executive support, I didn't catch any of that.

Mr. Fielding: Well, thanks—once again, thank you for the—can you hear me there?

An Honourable Member: That's better, yes. That's better.

Mr. Fielding: Okay, good. Excellent.

So part of this, once again, with our new government, we're able to save taxpayers a lot of money, and a lot of this money, what we're able to put back in programming, is just identified the amount of money that we've invested in the most vulnerable citizens. We talked about the numbers already, the \$175-million increase, the \$49 million for other departments, Child and Family Services over \$20 million.

* (15:30)

But just to get to the heart of the question, in terms of the ministers' salaries and the executive support, what we've actually saw, because there's one less minister going down from 19 to 12, before, once again, there was two ministers that were associated with this department. There was the Department of

Family Services and Housing and other areas that were assembled together. So we actually saw about a \$37,000 saving to taxpayers by reducing the amount of ministers' salaries. We saw taxpayers save about \$211,000 in terms of some of the executive salaries, and those are salaries of people that support the minister and the deputies, if you will. Over \$80,000 savings in executive operating and about \$180,000 in other positions due to bringing Housing over and some of the duplications that are there.

So we truly think that making that move, you know, assembling and putting them together, putting the departments together, there's some synergies with the departments that have come together. We also think that saving taxpayers the amount of money which I just identified, we think makes better—and if you're able to save money like this, you're able to put it in taxpayers, you know, you can put it actually into program that's going to make a difference for kids. And that's what we're, you know, from our level, and I think all elected officials want to see the system improved.

So it is important when you do have a deficit in the neighbourhood of \$1.1 billion, or just over a billion dollars in the last go about—I don't have the exact numbers but I can give you an estimate—that right now you'd spend somewhere in the neighborhood of 800 and—over \$850 million. I don't have the exact numbers, but I know it's \$850 million in debt servicing costs that go to pay for the debt, essentially to raise the money. And this is money if you're able to bring down the deficit and essentially borrow less money, that's \$850 million that you could put towards, you know, infrastructure or protected children services. Going to take a while to get there, of course, because you've got accumulated debt.

But the point is valid; the point, the fact is if you're spending too much money, you know, you're taking over debt servicing that could go towards vital programming. And so we think that this budget got it right and we're excited to be a part of it.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, we'll get back to some of the finances, but I say miigwech for that and—particularly to the staff that have all the numbers and all the knowledge on it.

So I'm going to ask the minister, how—what is the exact number of children that are in care right now?

Mr. Fielding: Well thank you for the question, and I think we can all agree that there's too many children in care. As of March 31st, 2000, there is approximately 10,295 children in care. The 2,000—I'm sorry, the 10,295 includes 9,589 children in care and 706 children in care under voluntary placement agreements. Children in care on a voluntary, temporary basis, of course, is made up at the request of the agreement. The number includes both provincial and federal cases. The total number of children in care includes children in all placement categories, namely foster care, kinship care and places of safety. We report—we will report on the numbers of children in care as of March 31st, 2016 in a '15-16 annual report. These numbers are currently collected and verified each year throughout the annual report.

We know that it's important work to do and important that Manitoba children and family services—it's extremely important for the system to ensure the safety of the children. You know, we obviously look forward to working with everyone, including indigenous leadership, service agencies. We want to—you know, our focus for our government, I know that's been a big focus for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has really guided us to go out and talk to front-line workers, talk to people in the indigenous community, talk to everyone that's a part of it. And—because we think that number is way too high.

And we also know that an increase of children in care by upwards of 55 per cent since 2008 alone is not an acceptable number. And so we need to do a better job not just from a government point of view but I think from a societal point of view in terms of how we take care of the kids, in terms of how that process works.

And we have inherited some of this and—but, you know, I don't want to have politics get in this. I'd prefer looking at solutions that take into account everyone's consideration. And we think—a part of that, a big part of our platform, was things like The Protecting Children Act, which we are a big supporter of. And it's something, a major initiative, that we talked about as a priority for the government, and we had suggested that we're going to introduce The Protecting Children Act within the first hundred days. And so we're happy to be a part of that, to be part of the process.

But, once again, we want to work with everyone, indigenous communities as well as stakeholders and

front-line workers, to find some solutions that you don't have this amount of children in protective custody that are part of our society. So that's the answer.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister please provide a breakdown of the numbers per authority and CFS agencies?

* (15:40)

Mr. Fielding: Usually it's me messing up the—I guess I'll have to call you the member from St. Vital. Thank you for the question.

Just for the member's record, these numbers are posted in the annual general—the annual report which is tabled in September. So I can do two things right now: (1) we will facilitate to get those numbers for you, the current numbers.

But I can tell you, looking at 2010, just looking at a chronicle of the background: in 2,000—in March 31st, 2015, there was 10,295; in 2014, March 31st, there was 10,293; March 31st of 2013, there was 9,940; in 2012, there was 9,394; and 2011, there was about 9,104 people.

I will read into the record last year's annual report in terms of the numbers and, once again, we will work to get you the current numbers, but it is tabled in the annual report in September.

But the numbers that were tabled into the annual report for 2014 to '15 were the following: for the First Nations north authority, you have about 2,933; for the First Nations southern authority, the total was 4,551; for the general authority, the total numbers were 1,700; and the totals overall—Metis—I'm sorry—authority was 1,111; and the total numbers overall were 10,295. And that's based off the annual report which, I believe, is tabled in September.

Ms. Fontaine: Is it possible—I guess I haven't received a copy of that. Is it possible to get a copy or if I can just be directed on where I can get a copy?

Mr. Fielding: I believe it is on the library. We'll definitely get you a copy if you need one, and it—I'm assuming it would be online, too, but I'd have to confirm with our staff on that. But, absolutely, the answer.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, I appreciate that. Are there currently any children living in hotels?

Mr. Fielding: The information that I got from assistant deputy minister for children protection services and our deputy minister, the answer is no.

Ms. Fontaine: Will you be building more level 6 beds?

Mr. Fielding: Thank you for the question, and, with CFS, the level only goes up to 5. Maybe with CLDS it goes up through 1 through 7, but with CFS, the levels only go up to 5.

I also would like to hand a copy of the annual report to the member from St. Johns.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, I appreciate that; that's beautiful.

And, you know what, obviously my notes are a little wrong here, obviously, so perhaps the minister could explain the levels of beds for CFS, just for my own knowledge.

* (15:50)

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for the question. And just to answer a number of the elements of it, I can provide a number of the information today and we'll have to get back with one element of it.

Foster care, in terms of the levels, it obviously goes up 1 through 5. And residential treatment bed levels go from 3, 4, 5. The first one is, really, basic maintenance, I guess, if you will. And the levels really are based on the needs of the child. So the service provider as well as, you know, the agencies—or the service providers as well as the authorities look at the per diem range and the needs of the child, I guess, if you will. level 5, higher up, is basically done through the authority plus the agency, and it's the individual rate approval process.

So that's kind of the breakdown, I guess, if you will, in terms of the levels.

Ms. Fontaine: I guess—sorry, I'm just trying to formulate. I'm just trying to wrap my head around my question here.

I guess I'm really looking for level 1, level 2, level 3, level 4, level 5, what the parameters or the criteria would be for each of those children within those levels, and then attached to that, what those per diem rates look like for each of those levels.

But I am looking for as much information and detail on each of those levels just so again, respectfully, I can get a better sense of the system.

Mr. Fielding: Okay, well thank you for the question. I will go into—first of all, level 1 is kind of a basic needs, and the per diem for that day is about \$30 a day. The highest need, which, of course, is a level 5,

and that per diem is around \$150 a day. With conferring with our staff, it is a—sorry, correct the record—\$1,500 a day for level 5. So, once again, for level 1, it's \$30 a day; for level 5, it's \$1,500 a day. And it can go up to—so it's not a—you know, that's the number.

In terms of the actual categories, I think you asked what the make-up is. What some of our officials talk about is that there is—it's a complex process to go through, and we can provide that information, but it's really based on the needs of the child that's in care. So it's hard to kind of just give you a two-paragraph answer on it, but we will get all the information back to you tomorrow to break it down. But as I understand from our officials, it is based on the needs of the child.

* (16:00)

Ms. Fontaine: So, I mean, I understand that it's based on the needs of the child, and I'm not necessarily looking for just two paragraphs. Like, I'm good to go through all of these particular criteria and how these needs manifest themselves. So, you know, don't be, on my account, trying to minimize the information that you're giving me. I'm looking for as much information as I can get. And so, if the department—if you want to get back to me on, again, the criteria and what those needs—how those needs manifest themselves, and so, you know, are we looking at—I mean, again, that 'criteria' in respect of those needs, I'm looking for that information.

Can the minister advise how many children out of the 10,000 are in each of the levels?

Mr. Fielding: Okay. Thank you for the question. The information that I have, actually, at my hands here—and we'll endeavour to get further information on it—but what I can do, is give you a breakdown of the days in care for each level—level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 for each of the regions and agencies.

So the First Nation of Northern Child and Family Service Authority agency and region—the whole region, I guess, if you will, for children that are in care there was 194,079 days of care for children that were in level 1. level 2, there was—this—once again, this is for the First Nations of Northern Family Service Authority—for level 2 there was 2,310 days of care; that's for children that were in those subcategories. In Level 3 there was 67,490 days of care. By the way, this is in the annual report I'm reading from; the 2014-15. As mentioned, it is tabled in September on annual basis. For level 5,

for instance, there's 10,098 days, and that—once again, this is for the First Nations Northern Child and Family Services Authority.

For the First Nations of Southern Manitoba Child and Family Services, that's through the authorities, through the agencies and the region as a whole, there was—in terms of level 1, there was 473,742 days of care; level 2 there was 56,552 days of care; for level 3 there was 311,368 days of care; for level 4 there was 203,257 days of care; and level 5 there was 16,116 days of care. And for the Southern Authority, that's a grand total overall.

For the general Child and Family Services Authority Agencies and Regions, under level 1 the amount of days of care, I guess—children in care for level 1 was 177,311; for level 2—18,104; for level 3 there was 21,137; for level 4 there was 30,173.

For the Métis Child and Family Service Authority, for level 1 there was 997,902 days of care; for level 2 there was 79,654 days of care; for level 3 there was 564,648 days of care, as well as for level 4—sorry, level 4 there was 612,682 as mentioned; and level 5 there was 65,146 days of care. And that is in the annual report.

* (16:10)

There is, I believe, the other information is something that our departments will be working on. But that is tabled right in the report.

I guess just to add a few—fewer information for it, you can see that a lot of the days of care, I guess, for each of the regions, vast—not a vast majority, but that a good portion of that is level 1, and looks like level 4, there seems to be substantial amounts of days for each of the regions in terms of days of care.

Ms. Fontaine: So, miigwech for reading this out to me.

So, again, though, my last question was actually how many children per level, so that was my specific question—and, again, I appreciate this book, because I was able to read along with you what I had already read, so that's great, but I am really looking for the number of children per level and, I guess, for all of the agencies.

Mr. Fielding: We'll endeavour to get that, so I'll take that question under notice—leave, and our department will be able to provide that information.

Ms. Fontaine: That's wonderful and much appreciated.

Can the minister—and, again, I'm just trying to wrap my head around it because, of course, your staff are the experts here. I'm just trying to wrap my head around the general authority.

So the general authority, I understood, was for non-indigenous children, and so I'm just—I note here on page 94 of the annual report 2014-2015, that if we look that in—in the general authority there are children that are noted as Metis and First Nation and, then, of course, general non-Aboriginal, I'm just trying to understand how indigenous children actually get into these particular numbers, if somebody can walk me through that?

Mr. Fielding: Just for clarification, you're—I'm assuming you're referring to the annual report? Is that this book that we just gave you? *[interjection]* Okay, thank you.

Okay, thank you for the question. And first of all the intake obviously is done through All Nations Coordinated Response, ANCR. ANCR has a determination protocol, so it's called authority determination protocol and essentially what happens is that the parents choose which authority they want to receive the services from. So it's really up the actual parents, and if they choose to go the general authority or whatever authority, they're able to do that, and then, of course, the authority at that point makes the determination of which agency is there.

If you're interested, just to the speaker, on the website, just looking right here on the Families website, Get Started, under subsection 1.1.1 Intake, it—there is kind of a PDF does explain it. So there's more information that is there on the website that talks about the determination.

But essentially the answer is that it's really up to the parents and where they want to go.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that clarification. So I know that in the minister's preamble he had discussed this year's, as of March 31st, 2016, numbers, overall numbers. I'm going to ask the minister if he would be so kind as to provide me for March 2016, March 31st, 2016, the total numbers for, and, again, on page 94, we have it for—so I'm would—I'm looking for the total number of Inuit children in care, the total number of Metis children

in care, the total number of First Nation children in care, and the total number of general children in care.

Mr. Fielding: Just for the members of the committee, would it—would you be amenable to taking a five-minute break? We're obviously going to be here 'til 6 p.m. or so. If the committee is, I leave that to you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairperson: Does the committee agree to take a five-minute recess? *[Agreed]*

The committee recessed at 4:20 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:31 p.m.

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

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

I just would like to ask members to please indicate when they would like to speak by raising their hand. Between conversations, it's hard for the Clerk behind to indicate microphones are being turned on.

So the floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Fielding: We had a response to one of the questions. I believe the question was about 2016 numbers. We can get back to you with an estimate. It is normally tabled in September, so the number that we can provide to you will be an estimate. I guess the real number will be when it's normally tabled in September for 2016—the annual report. So that's the best we can do.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm sorry, then, was I wrong earlier—I have so many papers here—was I wrong when the minister said that the current number for March 31st, 2016, was ten thousand, nine hundred and something? Am I wrong on that?

Mr. Fielding: I believe the numbers that we gave you were the 2015 numbers to that date. If that isn't part of the record, that should be, because—I just want to—let me just—yes, the numbers are through March 31st, 2015, so this is based off the annual report. That's the latest numbers we have, so that was a mistake from my behalf when I did mention that it was—I'm pretty sure I did say '15, but, in any event,

I'll correct the record if it was inaccurate. But that was based off of the annual report's numbers, which is the official numbers.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, miigwech for that. I must have misunderstood, because I had thought I had heard ten thousand, nine hundred and something, so—but just so that I'm completely accurate, the current numbers that the department is working off of are based on the 2015 numbers, which the total number of children in care were—are 10,295.

Mr. Fielding: That is correct, yes. Two thousand—sorry, 10,295 based off of March 31st, 2015, which is the official numbers from the annual report for 2014-15. The '16 numbers come out in September. That's when the annual report is tabled. We can get you the '16 numbers, which aren't official. They won't be official until it's tabled in '16.

And, to make up that two—10,295, once again, just quickly, the northern authority is there's—there was 2,933. The First Nations southern authority, there's 4,551. The general authority, there were 1,700 and the Metis authority, there was 1,111, which makes up that subtotal number of 10,295 based off the annual report in 2015.

Ms. Fontaine: So the minister just said that he would get me the 2016 numbers?

Mr. Fielding: Absolutely. They won't be official, once again, just because the official numbers come out in that September annual report, but absolutely, yes.

Ms. Fontaine: And when can I get those numbers?

Mr. Fielding: We can get them to you by the end of the week. If we can have them to you tomorrow, we will.

Ms. Fontaine: And if possible, if I can just get a similar breakdown, that would be so appreciated.

Mr. Fielding: Absolutely, we'll do our best.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, and, again, miigwech to your amazing staff. I really appreciate that.

Would the minister be so kind as to give a status update in respect of StreetReach?

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

I hope to get a little bit into it, but Budget 2016, which makes it for the Child and Family Services budget—as I mentioned, it went up by over \$20 million. What the StreetReach program—it increased by nine FTEs approved from the 2015 to

'16 for expansion of StreetReach program. And that represents \$553,000 increase from last year.

I can give you a kind of a status update, I guess. And forgive me; I'm reading off some, you know, verbatim, but it is important, and I think it's an important program. Over the last year, StreetReach has seen a 400 per cent increase in the referrals—*[interjection]* Thank you. Once again, over the last year, StreetReach has seen about a 400 per cent increase in terms of the referrals. As mentioned, they'll soon increase the full-time equivalent employees to meet the increased demands for the service.

StreetReach continues to receive national recognition, as I'm sure you are well aware, from law enforcement and child-welfare services and other federal and provincial departments regarding the innovative response to exploited, trafficked—'traffickeded'—sorry, I'm not pronouncing that—children and youth. StreetReach identifies children at the highest risk of exploitation, high-risk victims. Children are then located and returned to place of safety.

*(16:40)

StreetReach also seeks to—seeks and locates other children that have been reported missing, as they may also be in need of protection as defined out of The Child and Family Services Act, CFS act.

Some of these numbers are, reading over, are quite striking in terms of what the program has done. StreetReach has been involved in the investigation and arrest of several offenders who have been in violation of section 52 of the CFS act and protection orders granted under the child exploitation and human trafficking act.

Over the last year, StreetReach, as mentioned, has seen about a 400 per cent increase in referrals. The current staff complement cannot be continued to sustain existing operations to address the issues. A StreetReach manager capped the numbers of assessment—you know, children, I guess, to a maximum of 20 children until the new positions are in place. In order to cap the number to 20, over 61 children had to have been moved in terms of a pending assessment category.

So I guess what we're saying is the program has been a success. And there's some different stats, while I've been reading—briefing on our budgets, that shows the success of it and of that, the budget has increased by over \$550,000. So it is a focus for the

government and we're happy to have that increase included in 2016 budget.

Ms. Fontaine: So the \$533,000 increase to StreetReach's budget actually translates into what exactly?

Mr. Fielding: The—it's \$553,000, an increase of nine FTEs approved for 2015-16 for the expansion of StreetReach program. So my officials, our officials, the government officials, you know, says it's essentially for staff, staffing.

Ms. Fontaine: And just to be absolutely clear, are there any, from this \$533,000 increase, is there any supports, additional dollars going to supporting the children that are getting referred here? Or is it strictly just to the staff positions?

Mr. Fielding: So the question was in terms of is it more staff, is it more programming? And I guess the answer is yes, it would be more programming because right now the current staff in complement, they, you know, at least what—they cannot continue the existing operations on addressing the increased referrals.

So right now StreetReach—the manager capped the number of assessment and consideration, so AC children to a maximum of 20 right now. So with the increase of funding which allows for individuals to be there, FTEs I guess if you will, the new position will allow for more referrals. So in order to cap the number at 20, right now there was 61 children that have been moved to the pending assessment. That's what it was before. So this will allow us to address it.

So I guess the short answer really is, yes, there is going to be more kids—there's more kids in the wait line for assessments, so the new FTEs are going to provide a better scope for service, and I guess better response, right, better response time because there's more people that are there to assess and help, you know, the ladies then, the women then, you know. It is a quicker response time and they are able to get to programming and services quicker.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that. The minister may or may not know that in fact back in 2007, the body of Fonessa Bruyere was found. She was 17 years old and she had been murdered. And as a result of that, Fonessa actually was one of the young girls that kind of fell through the cracks and almost immediately—that was late August 2007, a variety of things took place at that time. One of them, in fact, was—I was the director of justice at the Southern Chiefs' Organization, so with—along with other community

organizations, that was actually the first time that we called for a national enquiry on this issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. At that time as well we called for the development of a task force with the RCMP and WPS. And so of course we know that that actually came two years later as a result of the murder of Cherisse Houle and—17 years old as well—and Hillary Angel Wilson, who had just turned 18.

But the other thing that had taken place after Fonessa's body had been found, which, incidentally, is from both myself and the deputy minister's community, was—there was almost an immediate response of community agencies working with youth who were sexually exploited, some—in fact, it was Doug Martindale that also joined us, the WPS—the RCMP weren't a part of that then just yet—Sage House, a whole bunch of social service agencies that all got together. We started meeting actually at Sage House and we all came together in a really good, positive way to work together in respect to this issue of—really of the sexual exploitation of children in Winnipeg.

And shortly thereafter, we met, I think, once every month, and I think in the beginning once every week, and shortly thereafter we had a PATH session. Lots and lots of us were there and everybody—it was such a good illustration of partnership, of government, of community, of the indigenous community, indigenous leadership, along with policing.

* (16:50)

In fact, we worked with Gene Bowers, who is honestly one of the best police officers that I know. He is just a kind, respectful, genuine human being. And we had an all-day PATH session, and out of that PATH session came this vision to deal with the sexual exploitation of children in Manitoba. And part of that PATH session was enhancements to Tracia's Trust, which minister—former minister Gord Mackintosh did, was a summit, all kinds of things. But one of them was the birthplace of, actually, StreetReach, because the individuals that were doing outreach knew that there wasn't any co-ordination.

However, that initial vision and the initial lobbying for this kind of, like, StreetReach concept, was that it would be fundamentally indigenous, that, in fact, it would be housed out of an indigenous agency. It would be led by an indigenous agency, and that it would be grounded within indigenous ideologies and frameworks in respect of dealing with

children who are sexually exploited. And then it changed. Then—and then, of course, it came under the Child and Family protection branch.

So my question—I just provide that for the minister. I'm not sure—I would imagine he probably doesn't have that far back information on StreetReach. But it goes to this broader analysis and practice within Winnipeg on the sexual exploitation of children. And it really has informed a lot of the work that we do. It actually has informed so much of the work that we've done that even the WPS have, because of lobbying for many, many years and working together—again, and the ability to work together can produce really good change—and so even the WPS, you know, moves away from, you know, the language of sex worker and prostitute and all of these things and recognizing, fundamentally, that these are children, right.

So this whole strategy really was born in a good, good way. There have been problems with StreetReach in respect of the indigenous community still wanting that original vision, the spirit of that original vision. So part of that, as well, was that StreetReach would be 24 hours.

So I guess my question is, you know, is there any movement to make StreetReach more in line with that kind of indigenous—really, the foundations of that view on what StreetReach could do, and is there any vision or movement in respect of making it 24 hours?

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for the question. I do want to reference just some comments you made about murdered, missing women. I actually was finishing off my role on the Police Board, actually, when that was discussed. And, you know, I'll give credit to credit due. Leslie Spillett is one who really focused in on that, and I think you're right; there has been a bit of an evolution with the Winnipeg Police Service over the last number of years on those issues. That was just at the very end of my term and I by no means am taking credit for that. I think that someone like Leslie Spillett that really drove that on the Police Board, who's on the Police Board right now.

To talk about StreetReach, and I think the premise of the question was in terms of 24-hour—there has, as mentioned in the budget, there is more positions that have been added, upwards of nine. You know, as a new government, we do want to consult in the community. I've had some initial conversations with, you know, even people like

Diane Redsky, who I know fairly well, on these and other issues.

But, I guess where I'm going with this is, we do want to consult the community. I think that there could potentially be the capacity to move towards a 24-hour system. To be fair, you know, I want to spend a lot parts of this summer, you know, consulting with groups and listening and seeing, you know, how things are working, so I guess the answer is we're definitely open to it.

Ms. Fontaine: Can I get an update or status on StreetReach North?

* (17:00)

Mr. Fielding: Okay, thank you for the question. I believe it was about StreetReach North. I did locate some of the stats which I think the member might—might be relevant to the discussion on StreetReach.

So StreetReach, of course, as many people know, really is two teams: StreetReach Winnipeg and StreetReach North, which provides co-ordinated, integrated efforts to locate sexually exploited children, intervene as soon as possible. They identify and address predators. Okay, we know all that. So I won't go into further detail on it.

But there is some interesting stats which I thought might be relevant in terms of how important the project is. In 2014-15, StreetReach workers checked a total of 2,856 addresses in search of missing children. StreetReach workers had 1,675 encounters with children who were being sexually exploited or at risk of being sexually exploited. Of that, the 1,675 encounters, there was—287 different children were identified. Children were returned 504 times to places of safety. StreetReach workers had twelve—sorry, 1,112 relationship-building contracts with children. StreetReach was also involved in several high-profile criminal cases where men were exploiting children.

In 2015-16, StreetReach workers checked 2,346 addresses—unbelievable—were checked in search of missing children. StreetReach workers had 2,201 encounters with children who were being sexually exploited, at the risk of being sexually—or, sorry, at—being at risk of being sexually exploited. Of the 2,201 encounters, 333 different youth were identified. Children were returned 451 times. And StreetReach workers had 1,681 relationship-building contacts. So it just chronicles the nature of the program and how effective it has been.

And that identifies some of the issues. We're trying to get a little bit further of an update for you on StreetReach North, so I think we're waiting for additional information on that. So maybe I'll leave that topic right now, that information, and we can get back to the member either by the end of the day or first thing tomorrow morning.

Ms. Fontaine: Those statistics that you just gave, is that for StreetReach Winnipeg and StreetReach North or is that just StreetReach Winnipeg?

Mr. Fielding: I believe that is for both, yes. The information that I have, provided by the department, talks about 2014 StreetReach workers, so I'm assuming that does include both Winnipeg and North.

Ms. Fontaine: Is StreetReach North still operational?

Mr. Fielding: Again, we're going to get some further information we'll be able to have either by the end of the day or first thing when we meet back tomorrow afternoon, give you little more of an update. It's, you know, essentially on the north—StreetReach North.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister provide—and, again, I say *miigwech* to the staff for providing that additional information. Can the minister provide an update on the status of adoption wait times?

* (17:10)

Mr. Fielding: Okay, well, thank you for the question, and just a little bit of background. As you probably well know, in June 15th, 2015, Manitoba proclaimed amendments to The Adoption Act and The Vital Statistics Act to provide access to birth records related to adoptions. The amendments apply to adoptees born in Manitoba who are adopted both in and outside of the province, as well as non-Manitobans born adoptees who were adopted in Manitoba.

The Post-Adoption Registry is really a legislated provincial registry that provides services to those individuals involved in the Manitoba adoptions who are—as mentioned, who are born and placed in adoption through another jurisdiction. The backlog is something that staff are currently working with, and I guess I would mention that there was really an overwhelming positive response of the adoption community to seek access to these important records.

The Post-Adoption Registry received close to 1,100 applicants between two thousand—June 2015—sorry, June 15th, 2015, and May 15th, 2016. The

huge demand for accessing these historical birth records has created a backlog, and the current wait time is something that needs to be addressed in a more fulsome way, and our staff is working on that. Post-Adoption Registry staff are working diligently, and the department has hired two additional staff to help to addressing these backlogs and wait times.

Clients are waiting—clients are aware of the delays in obtaining these birth records due to the large volume of requests.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Ms. Fontaine: So I'm not sure if you actually answered my question in respect of the adoption wait times. I—that question wasn't about the registry, or—I was actually asking about the adoption wait times.

Mr. Fielding: Apologize. We are waiting for the information to get back. I don't have that offhand; our staff doesn't, but they are working with other staff departments to facilitate the answer to it, so.

Ms. Fontaine: Would the minister be so kind as to give me a status on the expansion of the Families First program?

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

In terms of the family first, obviously, talking about the expansion into Point Douglas, I'll give you the numbers right off the bat. This budget increase is for the two-year—the increase is for a two-year pilot project initiated in early 2016 to expand the existing family first program Point Douglas area of Winnipeg.

So in this 2016 budget, we allocated additional \$404,000, and just to bring some context about the program I'll just go a little bit into it. Family first is a voluntary home-visiting program that offers information and long-term support to families from conception to the time their children enters kindergarten, and is funded by Healthy Child Manitoba office and delivered by the public health program of the regional health authorities.

In terms of the support for the program, the Families First program is supported as part of an important initiative to support the department's vision to focus on prevention and early intervention services whenever a child's—children going into care. The early intervention and prevention approach of this program is keeping with the recommendations talked about by Justice Hughes and the AMR Planning & Consulting which recommended

shifting emphasis to prevention and support services protection measures.

So this kind of goes in line with the discussion that's had of the importance of early intervention and prevention and, you know, we think it's obviously important to invest in the early years. If you can have the intervention and prevention, it's important.

And, you know, just in terms of my background, I actually worked at the Children and Youth Secretariat—which is now, obviously, evolved and the names have changed and that sorts—for two and a half years in the late '90s when I was here in political roles and elsewhere. So I truly embrace what things like Healthy Child is doing and I think if you can move towards intervention and prevention model, I think it will make a big difference.

So any initiatives we can do—I think this government is proud. I know this government is proud of the fact that there has been enhancement of the program and the two-year pilot project for \$404,000 is something I think we all can agree is a step forward.

Ms. Fontaine: Would the—miigwech for that. Would the minister be so kind as to provide a update or a status on the launch of child protection and mediation service?

* (17:20)

Mr. Fielding: All right, the child protection mediation pilot project—give you some facts and information on it which I'm sure you're aware of in most capacities.

Child protection mediation is a confidential and collaborative dispute-resolution process where services and systems that normally work independently are brought together to work together in the best interests of the child. A neutral mediator facilitates constructive negotiations and communications among parents or guardians, lawyers, child protection workers and possibly others, including elders, to reach consensus on a plan of care for children who are alleged to be abused, neglected or abandoned.

Terms of the 'pilot' project or why it was developed, we are committed to finding efficiencies in service delivery while supporting the invaluable work undertaken by front-line service providers. At the same time, we are seeking efficiencies in the child-welfare and justice system which is experiencing, obviously, increased numbers of child

protection cases. The pilot project is intended to test the efficiency or effectiveness, I guess, if you will—protection—of the child protection mediation. It is hoped that the pilot evaluation will demonstrate a decrease in the wait times for court resolution of child protection cases and kind of a timelier permanency planning for the child in care as well as the cost reductions in child welfare and justice systems.

In terms of what it's intended to do, the child protection mediation builds on family mediation, which is proven to produce high settlement rates, with both families and professionals perceiving the process to be fair in belonging, that they have an opportunity to have their concerns heard by others. It is hopeful that the pilot project will increase efficiencies by reducing the costs to and burden of litigation of families, the child-welfare system and the courts by reducing the time a child spends in foster care and reducing the number of contested cases reviewed. It also affords the child in care an opportunity to have some say in decisions affecting his or her life and moving quickly towards permanency.

As child protection mediation is consensual, confidential and voluntary decision-making process, all parties must reach an agreement. They can lead to greater sense of teamwork and more understanding and ownership of the results by all parties involved.

So that's the—you know, the core of the program, really, why it was developed and the intention of it.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister advise what are the dollars that are allocated to the child protection mediation services and whether or not there's going to be any enhancements to the program?

* (17:25)

Mr. Fielding: With the fact that it is a pilot project, that evaluation is going on, so, as such, you know, I think with pilot projects, the good thing about pilot projects are if they're successful, you know, and you see some benefit to them, I think you'd look to expand it. The same thing goes with the other way. If you're not seeing as effective, you would have to re-evaluate whether you're funding it. So that evaluation, I guess in terms of next steps, is—will be ongoing.

We look forward to evaluating the valuation reports and any recommendations arising from the piloted services. Really, I think, you know, the results will dictate whether we expand it or we put

more money into it or not. I don't think anyone at this table would disagree with the fact, if projects are effective and they're making a difference in the community, then why wouldn't you look to expand it? But, on the other side of the equation, I think people would also agree is, you know, if you're not getting results, you know, you'd have to consider what your investments are, whether you maintain them or whether you make some changes.

But, at the end of the day, there's an evaluation processes that has to happen and there's due diligence, and we'll have to wait and see how that piloted process works and the evaluation and what it tells us, and then we can make some decisions in the future.

Ms. Fontaine: So miigwech for that answer, but I did also ask for the dollar amount that's allocated towards this.

Mr. Fielding: Well, first of all, the pilot is, it's a collaborative effort between Manitoba Judicial Services and two divisions of the Department of Families: Child and Family Services division and Community Service Delivery division. CSDD provides a full-time position, CFSD is covering the policy and project support salaries that are associated with it, salaries and benefits that are associated with it. Judicial Services is playing an advisory role; Metis Child and Family Services is the project primary source of child protection referrals.

Manitoba, or sorry, Family Conciliation services is providing the mediation services which consists of full-time family mediators for the life of the project, clinical supervision and administration support for the pilot project. The pilot capacity is at a maximum 10 child-protection cases. Currently, the project's referral process is an important piece going forward.

So the long-winded answer, or the short answer to that, is it's done through existing staff within departments.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm going to close out for today so that the member from River Heights can ask questions, but I just wanted to say miigwech to each of the minister's staff for your brilliance and your patience with my questions.

Miigwech.

* (17:30)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My first question concerns the Children's Special Allowances receivables or recoveries. I note, on page 146 of the budget document, that that amount in the just past year amounts to about \$25 million and, in this year, the estimated revenue is about just under \$30 million.

And I also note, in looking back over the last several years, that there's been a very rapid growth in this number from about \$5 million in the 2003-2004 year, and I'd be interested to know what's the reason for the \$5-million increase in this fiscal year, and secondly, why has there been such a rapid increase? Has there been changes in policy over the years since 2003-2004?

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for the question. The—I guess the long and short answer to it is, the changes in terms of revenue was based off changes, as you're probably well aware, of the child benefit on the federal level that was associated with the program. So that answers the question in terms of the child-benefit portion of things.

Mr. Gerrard: That may answer the question for the current year. But, going back to 2003-2004, I suspect there were some policy changes as well, because there weren't always such significant changes in federal revenue through the child tax benefit.

Mr. Fielding: So just some clarification. The question is you're asking what—the revenue change was the amount you had mentioned, but you're ask—the—just want to clarify the question.

Mr. Gerrard: In the fiscal year, which just ended, the number in—was \$25 million and, this year, it's \$30 million. What you're saying is that the difference this year relates to the increased child tax benefit at the federal level. But, if you go back to 2003-2004, instead of anywhere near \$25 million, it was just \$5 million. And, for much of that time, there wasn't, you know, a big increase in child tax benefit, federally, so were there some policy changes which explained that increase in recoverables?

Mr. Fielding: Thank you for the question.

The answer to the question is, essentially, it's a complex issue, but a large part of it is you've seen the amount of kids in care increase, so the volumes or the amount of kids that were actually in care

increased as well as the length of time which they stayed in care increased.

There, of course, is also, on a global scale, some discussions—as you're probably well aware, the human rights tribunal had come out fairly recently and talked about the difference between on reserve and off reserve in terms of the global dollars, you know, whether there's proper amount of money flowing onto—on reserves.

So that's a question that's kind of being decided. I guess some questions have been put forth by the—well, decision has been made, but the federal government needs to make a decision of what that means and will it be some financial—will there be more money flowing, essentially, in through the provinces. Those decisions are yet to be made. You might be able to help provide some insight onto that and join us in partnerships and discussions with the federal government on that level.

Mr. Gerrard: I'm aware that some of the money that was provided as child tax benefits for kids in Manitoba was put in trust funds so that the money would be there for the kids when they came out to—became 18.

I wonder if the minister has any information on the amount of dollars in total that had been put in trust funds and was then recaptured through this recovery from the children's—what's called the recovery of the children's special allowances.

* (17:40)

Mr. Fielding: Okay, yes, to answer the question: No, the Province does not collect any money in the trust funds that are there. We do use—the Province uses the child's special allowance to off-set child maintenance costs. And that's for things such as education, training of child care. The—obviously, the Province has already paid agencies for these costs and require them for reimbursement to partially off-set the child-maintenance costs.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister was very quiet and it was hard to hear. I wonder if you could just repeat the last.

Mr. Fielding: Okay, the answer to that is no, the Province doesn't have any money in trust funds that are part of it. The Province, obviously, uses the child's special allowance to offset child-maintenance costs.

Mr. Gerrard: There were agencies within the Province and under the Province which did have

such money in trusts. And I wonder if the minister would be prepared to look into this further and to try and determine what this situation was.

I'm going to move on to a second line of question.

Mr. Fielding: We'll review it and look into it for you, Dr. Gerrard.

Mr. Gerrard: Now, this is an area of Employment and Income Assistance, and I'm told that there's been some changes so that fishermen in several communities are finding they no longer qualify for EIA due to new rules where previously they were able to. I—my understanding is that this deals with—the fishermen in question are operating a small business. As with small proprietorships in other domains, they sometimes employ family members. But under the new rules this, apparently, is viewed in such a way that certain members are no longer able to qualify for Employment and Income Assistance, and I wonder if the minister would look into this and see if there's a way of correcting this.

Mr. Fielding: Sorry this took so long. The answer—you know, I—conferring with our staff—individuals—and we're going to take this matter under advisement. We're not aware of any changes in EIA policy related to self-employment in terms of fisheries. But there is, obviously, as you can appreciate, a whole bunch of rules and regulations that are part of it. So we will review that and, hopefully, we can get a response back to you in a timely fashion, potentially tomorrow.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you; much appreciated.

Now, I note the government has committed to reducing the wait times for children, you know, wanting to get into or parents wanting to get their kids into child care and early childhood education. And so I'm wondering what the government's goal is in terms of being able to reduce the wait times from the extraordinarily long times at the moment down to, say, something that's more reasonable, like wait times of under three months.

* (17:50)

What is—when will the government reveal the plans to be able to achieve the reduction, and what is the timeline for achieving such a goal?

Mr. Fielding: Okay, thank you very much. Well, you're right about the three-month wait time, Dr. Gerrard. Right now, I'm online; our child registry wait time is—this is for children who require care

immediately within the next three months—is 7,333. This is something that, obviously, we are inherited, to a certain extent, in terms of the wait times. I would like to add that the child-care system in Manitoba is a strong one. I think it's recognized that Manitoba probably is the second best child-care system in the country beyond potentially Quebec.

But, in terms of our strategy, and we did talk a little bit about this in the campaign and I have spoke a little bit about it, but our strategy early learning and child care is in the process of being developed. We—our plan, really—we're committed to working constructively and co-operatively with early learning and child-care stakeholders to help Manitoba families who need licensed child-care services. Our government will take steps to improve access to child care and beginning to address some of the wait times in the child-care system by, No. 1, simplifying the process governing the operating as well as the operations of child-care facilities, with a focus on the home child-care system. I don't think anyone would disagree that there potentially could be—

Madam Chairperson: Order.

Excuse me. Could I please ask that the—respect the member—the minister who has the floor. There's a little bit of too much noise in the background. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Fielding: So, once again, we believe that part of the plan, part of the process will be simplifying the process governing the operating and opening of child-care facilities with specific focus on a home child-care system. That's something that I can tell you from personal experience all three of our children have gone through the home-based child-care system and I think it is an effective means. It's obviously not the only thing that's there.

We also want to work in partnerships with the school divisions to increase the numbers of child-care centres in schools which we think is important and can help with the number of children waiting in—on wait lists. Increasing incentives, becoming ECEs is also part of our plan. We think that including working in partnerships with post-secondary institutions, enhanced scholarships and bursary opportunities and promoting ease of access to early child-care education training by expanding training facilities to more educational institutions is important.

We also think they continue to partner with organizations like Family Dynamics, a community organization specializing in child care, is extremely important. And the department will focus on shortening the wait times for child care through programs, reinvigorate investments in private sector spaces to reducing barriers such as unnecessary red tape, which we think stops further—not just home-based cares from happening. So we do want to reduce some barriers and red tape.

The Province also working with the federal government, as you probably know, in collaboration where there's been some discussions. In fact there has been—dollars have been appropriated. I don't have the exact numbers right in front of me. We had initial meeting with the federal minister fairly recently in terms of early learning and child care. Needs with—also other issues that the federal government supplied in terms of money for housing. That's a part of it. So we think that working with the federal government in co-operation is important.

Just giving you some of the stats. The federal funding is in the 'neighbourance' of \$500 million. In 2017-18 we allocated for the following areas. The federal government has announced \$400 million in support of early learning and child care in provinces and territories, which we think is a substantial number, a hundred million for a separate framework to support indigenous early learning and child care, which we also think is important. Manitoba wants to and will continue to work with the federal government on these initiatives to enhance child care and address some child-care spacing needs.

So, long story short, we do think that our plan is a step forward in terms of the child care and providing access and good-quality care for our citizens and for parents that are needed. We know that child care is a vital service. I mean, it's something that parents need is—I can attest, just my own personal family, how critical it's been, and we've created lifelong relationships with our child-care providers. In fact, we still have maintained strong relationships with them, so I fundamentally see how critical a role that is, and we want to address this and we think that some of the elements that we talked about in a recent election campaign will help address the situation.

We want to work with the child-care association in other organizations and agencies that have good ideas and we also want to essentially tap into some of the money that's been put forth by the federal

government. So those discussions are ongoing, and we're hopeful that that will address it. But, to be fair, we were left with a pretty big burden in terms of the amount of people that are on wait times. So we're optimistic of our plan and we want to work with the federal government to address it.

Mr. Gerrard: There are many in River Heights who are eager to know what the—all components of the plan are.

When will the elements be rolled out, and including the new rules that you talk about?

Mr. Fielding: Just—Dr. Gerrard, just before I move into that I'll answer, respond back—

Madam Chairperson: Order.

I ask the minister to please remember to use the—to address the member by his—

An Honourable Member: The member from River Heights.

Mr. Fielding: The self-employment for fishermen: so we are not aware of any changes that would be affecting, I guess, the industry. That's talk about the fishing issue for self-employment and concerns.

If the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) can bring specific client cases to our office, my attention, we'll most definitely look into it, but we cannot identify any impact in terms of services that are there.

But, if there's specific cases, then direct them towards us.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

INFRASTRUCTURE

* (14:30)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Infrastructure. As this time, we invite the ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

We will now ask that the minister to introduce their staff in attendance.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): As seated at the table here is Lance Vignfusson, deputy minister; Ron Weatherburn,

assistant deputy minister; and Leigh Anne Solmundson Lumbard, assistant deputy minister.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Would the honourable member from Flin Flon introduce your staff.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): My staff is Dan Lambert.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Opening statements by the minister?

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, we already started. *[interjection]*

The honourable member from Flin Flon.

Mr. Lindsey: I'll finish off asking the question that I was going to ask during question period and see if I get a better answer than I did during question period.

Earlier in the week when we were with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in Estimates, we were talking about community benefit agreements and at one point in time it seemed to me that he had committed to the fulfillment of community benefit agreements that are already in place. Can the minister confirm that that is, in fact, true?

* (14:40)

Mr. Pedersen: These community benefit agreements, and I'm—I'll just make the presumption that he's talking about the east side—former East Side Road Authority. All of these community benefit agreements are under review right now to actually find out what the status of them is because we really don't know. The East Side Road Authority was this autonomous group that was responsible to no one, and that is—that was always the concern there. The board of directors has been replaced. Senior management has been replaced at the East Side Road Authority and it is in the process of being brought into the Infrastructure Department.

But part of this is—involves reviewing all contracts, whether they are road contracts, whether

they're maintenance contracts, whether they are community benefit agreements and what shape and form those community benefit agreements took the shape of. And I can just tell the member that it's quite a tangled web in that—under the former East Side Road Authority and it's going to take some time to be able to disseminate what's actually—what the department will be legally bound to, what was verbally committed, what—so there is, obviously, anything that—where there's a legal contract to—binding right now, it would be binding on the department. You would have to carry that through, but, really, we just don't know right now. We don't have a good handle on right now what the—what—where all these community benefits agreements are.

And there's far more than just the community benefit agreements. There is—there was road maintenance contracts. There is bridge contracts. There's new—we think there's many different kinds of contracts out there, and so to the extent will we honour the community benefit agreements, well, again, obviously, we have to honour those that are signed and legally binding. But this is something that we will have to look at and, moving forward, as we—as the former ESRA, if I can call it that, is brought under the Infrastructure Department, we will be looking at future contracts and, obviously, First Nations involvement in there is important. These are quite common, actually, for a number of road contracts, particularly in the North, but throughout Manitoba. There is a First Nations component built into those.

So we'll—this is going to take some time and just—you know, we're asking for patience. We've been in office for nine weeks. We've—we think we've accomplished a lot so far. But there's a lot more we know that has to be done, and we'll continue to do and we're working at this as just really as quickly as we can, but also making sure that we understand fully the contracts that are out there and understand fully the obligations that the Department of Infrastructure is now assuming by rolling ESRA back under the department. But we're quite excited in the department about the potential here for doing more road work and for extending the road construction on the east side and has always been known that the Department of Infrastructure builds roads and bridges and, that's what we'll continue to do.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, I've heard a lot, and yet I didn't hear a lot in that answer. Did I hear you say that you

will continue with your commitment to build the east-side road?

Mr. Pedersen: Yes, there is a commitment to continue building roads. In fact, this year, within the budget, there is \$70 million earmarked this year alone, in this fiscal year, for building roads on—in—on the east side. Hand in hand with that—so the commitment is there to continue building roads, and \$70 million this year.

Now, we will be doing a strategic review of all the projects that are—that have been done, and, again, finding out what is committed and what is not committed. But this is—I've said it many times; this is a tangled mess within, that ESRA had, and it's—very obviously, they had a different way of doing business than what the department does.

So, you know, we need to align this back within the Department of Infrastructure so that we can do this strategically. How do we get, you know, the best money—or the most roads for the least money? And that's, you know, realizing the challenges that there are with the terrain and the remoteness and et cetera.

But just, again, I just want to assure the member that there is \$70 million committed this year. There will—those have that First Nations' component built into those, so that, you know, there is—it's important. It's far more than just building the roads. It's about, and I think the member himself expressed this earlier, was it's the training involved and being able to provide employment for those communities, and the training that will build onto other projects once they have road access, because that's the whole purpose of building access to communities. We realize the importance of, you know—something that many of us just take for granted is having access to a community, and this is what we're building within the east side and throughout Manitoba. It's one thing to have access, and it's also to have good access too.

So we'll continue to build on this. But, yes, by all means, there's—it's going to be an active building season, on the east side, again this year.

Mr. Lindsey: We'll come back to the minister's definition of good access at somewhat of a little later point in time.

So, just to be clear, you and your government has committed and are committed to \$70 million worth of construction on the east-side road?

* (14:50)

Mr. Pedersen: Just further to the—the member was asking about \$70 million, and this is committed for this year. That \$70 million—and I should add that this was already in the budget prior to this government taking over. So we are assuming taking on what the previous government had already committed to. And this \$70 million is made up of contracts, actual contracts for road or bridge building, environment studies, pre-engineering, training and some staff to go along with that. So the member doesn't have to fear that this capital budget, construction budget is being cut on here. There is no—this is what was already in plan.

What we're doing right now, though, and this all relates back to the East Side Road Authority, is that currently right—in fact, right now we're meeting with six of the communities who have community benefit agreements. This is all part of understanding what we are assuming—business—the business that we are assuming under the east side by taking East Side Road Authority back under the purview of infrastructure. So it's business as usual for the construction.

As I said, the contracts, the environmental studies, the pre-engineering, all that work that needs to be done—training and staff—all that work that needs to be done before you actually build the road. And this is true, no matter whether it's on the east side or whether it's anywhere in Manitoba, this work needs to be done beforehand. So this was all committed before. We're honouring those commitments and we continue to work trying to evaluate what is actually in ESRA right now and by—this is a start where you're meeting with six of these communities that have the community benefit agreements, and find out what actually is in them, because nobody knows other than those who were in senior management of ESRA before. They were the only ones who knew what was in here, so—and that's not wise use of the taxpayers' money. And we are determined to get best value. And, as you get best value, it also helps those communities prosper and grow, because, ultimately, the idea is to get best value for your construction dollar, if I can call it that. And, as you do that, you will ultimately be able to build more infrastructure.

And this is—you know, the department is good at this. This is what the department does—they've been doing all over Manitoba. And they will continue to do it here, on what was the former East Side Road Authority. And—but the difference is we're taking out the bureaucracy out of this, which I know the previous government had a real fondness for. And—

but bureaucracy doesn't build roads, and it doesn't build bridges and it doesn't build access to communities. And, in fact, bureaucracy is one of those things that doesn't help relations—build relationships. And we're certainly determined to rebuild those relationships with these communities and move forward. And we will do this, but it's going to take some time to be able to do this.

Mr. Lindsey: It seems to me that the department is in great confusion, particularly when it comes to this east-side road, because a political decision was made to get rid of the East Side Road Authority itself and roll it into the department.

It would appear to me, looking from the outside looking in, that perhaps a better course of action would have been to find out what the people involved in the East Side Road Authority knew before you got rid of them all. It would have made all your deputy ministers' and managements' life easier, I would suspect.

Would the minister agree with that assessment?

Mr. Pedersen: Absolutely not, and I'll tell you why. It's because bureaucracies don't build roads. And what the East Side Road Authority did, it started out with the floodway authority, and it added millions of dollars to the construction cost of expanding the Floodway.

And, then, the previous government had the brainwave, well, let's move it over and expand it to the east-side road—and created the East Side Road Authority. In the meantime, you've got a department, within government, that actually does contracting, does environmental studies, pre-engineering, does training, has the staff to build this road.

But the member's colleagues, from previous government, seem to like to build bureaucracies and pay people to—this is what we're trying to find out: what they were actually doing within the East Side Road Authority. It sure wasn't building roads and it wasn't building infrastructure.

So, you know, the member can defend his bureaucratic ways of doing things, but he should realize that Manitoba taxpayers want best value. The east-side residents want access—road access. And how we're going to do that is by eliminating the bureaucracy and putting the professionalism of the Infrastructure Department to use rather than having this other bureaucracy keeping people employed for the sake of employment.

And what was—what's really troubling about the East Side Road Authority is that there was no reporting mechanism. They were not reporting to anyone. If they were reporting to someone, if they had been reporting to government, the public would have known what was involved in these community benefit agreements, what contracts have been signed.

*(15:00)

All the contracts that the department does, all their road tendering, their bridge tendering is all public information. Those contracts go out onto—it's called MERX, M-E-R-X; it's a way of putting it out to the public for tendering, but yet the East Side Road Authority was not doing that. So how do we know? How can the member sit there and say we were getting best value from the East Side Road Authority when there was no reporting mechanism?

And, when there's no reporting mechanism, it is not a good thing for the taxpayers, and so that's why we were—we are bringing the East Side Road Authority back under the folds of the Infrastructure Department, because we're determined to get best value and to have open tendering on all these contracts, and until we can find out—and I'll just keep repeating it. It's untangle the web of secrecy that was the culture within ESRA. Until we get that untangled, we are—the public will not know.

And, as I understand, there is a Auditor General's report to come out soon. I look forward to seeing that report, and I think all Manitobans will be interested in seeing that report, because we're—we just feel that this is how you get public—the public has the right to know what's going on, and, under the management of ESRA, there was no public information. And so that's what we are interested in finding out.

Mr. Lindsey: First, I would suggest that the minister should be careful about making suggestions of things that I've said when I haven't said them, so I would caution him not to do that.

It just—it baffles me how much more complicated it would appear to be to untangle this web that the minister claims is there when you got rid of everybody that had an understanding of how the system was working. I certainly can't debate if there was issues with how the East Side Road Authority was set up, because I wasn't involved. I wasn't involved in the government; I wasn't involved in any of that at that point in time, so I'm left to take the minister's word, I guess, that all these problems

existed that would have prevented building the road or got in the way of building roads with the East Side Road Authority.

And certainly I would not, for one minute, suggest that people working within the Department of Transportation are at fault or negligent in anything that they've done. What I've suggested is that a political decision to get rid of the board and people on the East Side Road Authority immediately before they had a good understanding of what was taking place with that authority perhaps was a rash decision that was made for political reasons rather than reasons that really made sense immediately.

And perhaps, if the government wanted to do away with the East Side Road Authority, if they'd have been a little less rambunctious in the process of doing that, they might not be in the pickle they claim to be in now where they don't know what agreements are where and who knows what. And so, again, I would suggest to the minister that maybe there was a better way of handling the East Side Road Authority, but, certainly, just to axe anybody that knew about it would appear, at this point in time, to have not been the right decision either. Would the minister agree with that?

Mr. Pedersen: Again, I'll start by saying no, I don't agree with him. But, however, saying that, I'm glad that the member agrees that it is a web—and I don't—I think he just used the word web, not tangled, but I'll throw tangled in on top of that.

Interesting, the member describes this government as being rambunctious. Yes, we are working at break-neck speed on a lot of issues because we've inherited a lot of trouble from this previous government that we have to sort out. So, you know, nine weeks in we've brought in a Throne Speech, we're getting ever so much closer to getting final approval on a budget that's going to bring real benefits to Manitobans.

In terms of the East Side Road Authority, the member should realize too, though, that there is—as I've stated, there's still that \$70 million—and that's a lot of money. Maybe it's not much in road construction, but \$70 million is still a lot of money to me. And, so, there is a significant amount of money that's still going into construction this year—or into pre-construction this year on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

The member should also realize too, that there was only three senior staff people that were removed

from the East Side Road Authority. It was not like there was mass firings or anything else; there was none of that. It's only three of the senior management that were removed. The rest of the staff is still working there. They—we've kept the rest of the staff. In fact, they are doing tremendous work to help the department and the new management staff in their review all the contracts that are out there, the community benefit agreements out there.

So—and I just want to give thanks to those remaining staff in there because they are doing tremendous work for us there too. You know, we'll hope to absorb as many as may want to come back into the department as we move forward on this because there is lots of pressure on the department with a very aggressive road and bridge construction, waterway construction agenda that we have for the department. We need all hands on deck and they're—you know, the staff is working very hard within Infrastructure Department, so we'll certainly look at bringing them—as many as want to come back into the department because we, you know, we have a very aggressive mandate to continue to rebuild the roads and bridges across Manitoba and, hopefully, make up for some of the lost time that we've had in the last 17 years.

So there's lots to do. I just want to make sure that the member understands that we will do our best to look after the staff that's remaining in ESRA, and this is an ongoing project and, you know, he calls us rambunctious, but there's just a lot of work to be done. And if, on one hand, the opposition says that we're not working, and now the member says we're rambunctious. So I'll take that as a compliment.

Mr. Lindsey: The minister probably shouldn't take that as a compliment because it certainly wasn't intended as one. Being rambunctious in cutting staff that knew what was going on is not the same as saying that you're working very hard and quickly at getting roads built. Two entirely different animals altogether, so please don't misinterpret what I said again. The rambunctious part was only in cutting some staff that might have been able to offer you assistance.

*(15:10)

So let's step away from the east side road for a little bit. I know you're having a lot of fun with it, but I got some specific questions about some specific roads in northern Manitoba.

I come from Flin Flon, Manitoba, there's been work going on on No. 10 Highway for a number of years now. People in Flin Flon are curious as to when they might see pavement on some of those sections of road, because the contractors left it in somewhat of a very poor state last fall at the end of construction season.

Having spoken to the contractor, and I'm sorry I don't have the name, he alluded to being one of the people in charge when I spoke to him and led me to believe that work on getting ready for the pavement on the worst stretches of No. 10 Highway between Bakers Narrows and Flin Flon was going to commence the week after the long weekend in May. We're now well into June and nobody sees any pavement there just yet.

And, while I appreciate the fact that this project has been a multi-year project and may continue well past the construction season this year, people are questioning when they'll see pavement on the parts that are done because the way it was left with just an oil finish was unsafe. There was potholes and it took complaints to the ministry of transport in Thompson as well as the contractor themselves before they actually got out and did some work to at least get it safe, if not finished.

So could the minister give me a timeline for construction on that road and when the project is planned to be finished, or at least when parts that are finished are planned to be paved?

Mr. Pedersen: The member's asking about Bakers Narrows to Flin Flon, that's correct? And that's what I've got information on.

The grading started last year, which—I'm repeating things he probably already knows, but I'll just repeat them anyway. The grading started last year. The grading portion of the contract was about \$10 million and there's \$1 million or so still to happen this year. The paving portion of the contract is about \$9 million. And it was supposed to have started by now, you're right. But there's been delays, rain delays in the paving season. And the contractors—there's flexibility built into these contracts so that there's no fixed dates for doing this particular stretch of road that you're talking about, because if the contractor is—has a contract somewhere else and it works for them to finish that contract before they come and do this one, if you tied—we get better value out of our contracting this way, because if you tied them into a date that they would have to come—in this instance, from Bakers

Narrows to Flin Flon—and they didn't have this other contract that they were currently working on done yet, the bid—the contract prices would go up because they would have to build in weather delays and other delays within their—and there's lots of things that can happen on a contract to delay them from coming.

But, in essence, this project is supposed to be done this year, again, finished this year. Weather permitting, it will happen. It's—the paving will start later this summer and the idea is that it's supposed to be done. Again, because of the rain delays, the member can probably appreciate, if it doesn't get completely done just because of a little bit later starting, you know, some of the grading or whatever needs to happen, the finishing that needs to happen, it will be completed next spring. But, obviously, the intention is to have the project done by later this summer.

Mr. Lindsey: I just remind the minister of a statement he made earlier about roads being safe. The way it was left at the end of construction season last year, it wasn't safe because multiple heavy trucks transporting concentrate from the Lalor mine in Snow Lake to the processing plant in Flin Flon use the road, or trucks from Reed mine, plus any number of other heavy vehicles. Leaving it with whatever kind of finish they left on it last year, it deteriorated over the winter and, certainly, come spring was potentially causing damage to vehicles. Certainly, the—whatever oil finish they had on it was not acceptable. When I spoke with the contractor, he seemed to think that they'd used the wrong kind of finish on it last year.

So, again, if the plan is not to start paving until later in the year, I suspect we'll run out of season again. I mean, last year was a remarkable year as far as highway construction went. I'm sure they were still working on particularly that section of the road well into October, which was getting, obviously, too late for putting pavement down.

Do we have a best guess estimate, I guess, as to—I mean, it's already been delayed because the best guess was it was going to start sometime in May. Just saying later in the summer, I guess that leaves it open to August and then we're into September. Is the plan to get pavement on that road sooner rather than later, I guess?

* (15:20)

Mr. Pedersen: Again, I remind the member that there—on these contracts—and I explained it

before and I can explain it again, if he wants—there's no fixed date. And I understand very well from a community point of view that you want the road fixed, paved yesterday. There's about 19,000 kilometres of road in Manitoba that we'd like to have fixed yesterday, but in reality we have to work with the contractors. By not affixing a date in here, as I explained, we're getting a better value on these contracts. Just have to remind the member that I think it was nine weeks ago that we took over this department, so if he has problems with the road last fall, perhaps he should have talked to the previous minister about that. Just saying, you know, like, I can only—we can only do as much as we possibly can.

Also remind the member that, and I know, or at least I'll guess that there's still a few more roads that he wants to talk about this year, but it's been a difficult winter and spring, particularly this spring, with frost boils. Maintenance of roads has been a real challenge across the province. It seemed, from what I gather, particularly in northern Manitoba, eastern Manitoba, the frost boils were particularly bad.

This all relates back to maintenance, too, because, you know, but I—look at, I can't help you for last fall. It was—perhaps—I just would rather not comment on—what the condition of the road left last fall. That was something, if you're inferring that the department should have been talking to the contractor, well, you know, that may well be, but that was beyond my control, and these Estimates here I can't control what happened last fall. So as much as I would like to have, it's not possible.

So, again, I cannot give you a date for the day the contractor's going to move in there to pave the road. All I can tell you is, is that it is scheduled to be done by this fall and the contractor will work towards that. You know, remember that the contractors need to get as much work done as possible, too, because the more work that they get done, the more work they can contract for next year too. They don't want these projects hanging over us and, you know, there's been some delays due to wet this spring or just not favourable weather. We can all hope for another nice summer and long fall in order to get this stuff done, but the contractor will do their best to get it done. It's in the contract and, you know, that's—you will be the envy of many other communities when you have a nice road leading into you because I've—I'm well aware of many other roads in Manitoba that would like to have that contractor move in and upgrade their road.

Mr. Lindsey: I'm sure there's many other jurisdictions in Manitoba would like to see a contractor; maybe not that one, the way he left the road, but that's another conversation for another day.

Okay, so the plan is to do everything possible to get that road paved this year. Is that correct?

Mr. Pedersen: Yes.

Mr. Lindsey: Thank you for that.

I just have a couple more—who am I kidding; I got a lot more questions about roads.

Highway 395—The minister and I have had conversations about 395. It's been brought up in question period. The complaints continue to come in and, just for everyone's interest and edification, Highway 395 is a gravel road that is in the Snow Lake area. It runs from Lalor Mine out to 392 and then it's been a road that was built—I don't know how many years ago, serviced small mines once upon a time. It's also a public access road, obviously, that people use for recreation and tourism. My understanding is now that the Lalor mine is—has really turned up production. There's more trucks than ever on the road and production is going to increase coming from that mine.

Can the minister tell us what the plan is to maintain—or to fix and maintain the road in a safe condition for everyone using it?

Mr. Pedersen: I—this is a—we'll deal with 395 here in a moment. But I just want to go back. If you buy a new car and you pull it off the lot and you drive it. You never change the oil, you never take it to the service station, you never change the tires. You just don't do anything. You end up having to buy a new car again because you haven't maintained it.

This is what's happened to our provincial roadways. Beginning about five, six years ago—and I can actually you the numbers if you don't really want to believe me on this—but just—suffice—I'll suffice to say that they cut about \$22 million out of the budget on maintenance and preservation beginning—going back about 2010-11.

When you don't maintain something, and I will use—this is a gravel road—395 is a gravel road. It's the same as many other roads as—roads in my community, the provincial roads in my community, the gravel roads in my community. You haven't maintained these roads. So not only are you not keeping them up, they're degrading because of usage,

and in 395 you may think that that's excessive usage. I can show you roads all over.

I can take you out to the Chair's communities out in southwest Manitoba and how the roads have been; you know, industrial use. Through the farming country. The trucks are bigger, and you get bad weather, and it beats up the roads. But if you don't spend money on maintaining something, it declines and it—and then it becomes to expedientially decline even faster as the years go on, and this is exactly what the price that we're paying for now all across Manitoba because of this maintenance and preservation budget being reduced significantly back in 2010-11, and then flat lined and, in fact, even down again in a couple of other years.

So this problem is not unique to 395, and I want the member to know that this happens—is happening all across Manitoba.

*(15:30)

So now in regards to 395, there have been some discussions—sorry, just—I'll back up a bit. The maintenance budget on it is about \$50,000 per year for the—for 395, but due to the heavy truck haul, they spend about \$250,000, or about five times the amount spent on this road, and that, we realize that the mining activity has increased, and that's good for the local economy for the—to have the mine running.

I'm told too, that the department has had discussions with Lalor and the community of Snow Lake about some cost sharing in here. The discussions are continuing. There hasn't been any agreement yet, but we've seen this in other communities where industry has stepped up to compensate for some of the damage they have, and just—we realize that this is a safety issue, this is an accessibility issue, but this is not unique just to road 395, and I realize it's in his constituency, and so he obviously has a vested interest, but I don't know of any member in this Chamber, including those who live in the city of Winnipeg, that don't have maintenance issues on the road, but we—and this is one of the things that we will have to address moving forward.

Mr. Lindsey: I appreciate that, and the minister is absolutely correct that heavy trucks, industry using infrastructure that was never designed for the amount, the tonnage, the use, does play a part in the degradation of roads, and I'm sure it's not just 395. I know, in my riding alone, it's not just 395; it's every road that connects the mine to—from this town to that

town. So there's a lot of roads—need maintenance work there, and there has been some ongoing maintenance, I acknowledge that. Even in the past years, there's been some ongoing maintenance, and there comes a point in time when ongoing maintenance is no longer sufficient and something more needs to be done, and I would suggest that not just 395, but that's the one that obviously I've been getting the majority of the complaints about—but 392 and 39 as well, which are major routes from the mine to the processing plants also need maintenance.

But is there any commitment to do something more to Highway 395, particularly this year, to try and upgrade it? And I'm certainly not opposed to having that discussion with industry and having them step up to the plate. I'm not sure that the town of Snow Lake can probably afford to invest in that road, although there is some benefit, obviously, to the town of having the mines and the processing plant within close proximity. So is there a commitment or can I ask the minister for a commitment to do something more, particularly with 395, right now to ensure that it is safe for people to travel on?

Mr. Pedersen: Well, I can certainly relate to the member about having phone calls to his constituency office. My constituency office is in beautiful downtown Carman, which faces out onto 13 highway, which CAA has declared to be the worst road in Manitoba. So my office rattles every time a semi goes by, and there are hundreds of semis going by every day, and I get many, many calls into my constituency office about, when are you going to fix that road, because I'm Minister of Infrastructure. How I wish it was that simple, that—so I can relate to constituency calls.

And this—my colleagues on each side of me here can relate to the same thing—

An Honourable Member: Like a bridge with a hole in it.

Mr. Pedersen: Yes, we—there's the toothless bridge at Portage, and you know, there's no end.

And I'm not making light of it. But this goes back to this maintenance issue that we've got. And we are going to have to—as a government going forward, as a department going forward—is going to have to figure out how do we address this maintenance deficit that we've got while still doing capital work, because lack of maintenance, lack of preservation leads to more capital you have to—the

road becomes so bad that you have to rebuild it and put money into capital.

So this is a problem that we are faced with. We knew this coming into office, that this was a problem and is something that we will address down the road. This is why in my mandate letter it talks about this billion dollars per year of Infrastructure spending on roads and bridges.

So we—we're going to—you know, and then you get into springs like this spring, where you—and every spring will have it to a certain degree of maintenance issues—of—whether it's frost wells or very wet weather or whatever it is.

The member should be aware that we are spending five times the amount that was—would be normally spent on maintenance of this road to try and knit it together, to keep it together. I realize there will still continue to be problems, but the department is—and the staff are doing their best on it, given the circumstances we've got.

There is a cost-share program too that's—and in this case, it's Lalor mines, and it's not simply a matter of just going to them and telling them, you're going to cost share on this. We have to build a relationship with this company. And I suspect that that relationship was not there with the previous government, so we are going to have to build up—build a relationship with them and show them that it's—that we'll partner, be partner with them.

It's not about blaming or—it's about what is best for the community, and it's best—what's best for their company, too, to help them become even more successful, because the more successful Lalor is, the more jobs there will be in those communities. And that's, you know, but then it puts pressure on the infrastructure. So it's a—it's not a problem, I call it. These are the challenges that we face and we will continue to find solutions to these challenges.

But just so the member knows, the department is doing all it can right now to try and keep this road in a passable condition.

Mr. Lindsey: Time—I'll turn the questioning over to my colleague from Wolseley.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Can the minister confirm his department is the one in charge of active transportation?

Mr. Pedersen: Thanks for the question, to the member from Wolseley.

Active Transportation is actually under the Department of Indigenous and Municipal Relations.

*(15:40)

Now, having said that, because most of active transportation is within municipalities in—most, the vast majority of it is within the urban part of municipalities, if I can call small communities urban even though they're a rural municipality, but—so, IMR oversees this. This Department of Infrastructure does work with IMR when there is such a thing as active transportation crossing a highway, for instance. Obviously, this department will be involved in making sure that the crossing is safe and—that the crossings are safe for an active—if there's active transportation trail.

The department is also developing a active—our department, the Infrastructure, is developing a departmental active transportation policy, and that's to enable the department to consider active transportation in everyday practices. This is to enable cyclists and pedestrians to make better route planning decisions, you know, should they decide to walk or cycle on provincial highways. And this—you know, IMR looks after the active transportation file but, if someone has—wants to develop a—you know, or plan, whether it's in themselves or whether it's a group that wants to develop this walking or cycling on provincial highways, obviously, safety is a huge factor there, and so we need to develop the policy that we can encourage it but, yet, still, provincial highways are—we don't want to impede on the provincial highways and we don't want to create safety issues there and, yet, at the same time, if, you know, why wouldn't we work with someone if they have an active transportation plan?

Mr. Altemeyer: I thank the minister for that question.

So, just to be clear, the separated, dedicated bike path that is to be attached to the southwest rapid transit corridor in Winnipeg, the money for that would not be coming out of your department; that would be under Indigenous and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Pedersen: So the southwest rapid transit system, the active transportation piece of the southwest transit corridor is all within the City's purview, City of Winnipeg's purview. They do the planning on that; they do the engineering, they—it's under their control. The Province has committed funds to the southwest rapid transit. There is a

funding agreement, but the actual planning of it and the actual implementation of it remains with the City.

Mr. Altemeyer: I thank the minister for the answer.

A similar question, can the minister confirm that the sewage plant upgrades that are planned for the City of Winnipeg, would those similarly be funded out of his department or a different one?

Mr. Pedersen: Again, Mr. Chairman, that is a City of Winnipeg project and the member should go and speak with Sustainable Development Department on that. There is provincial and IMR also on this, because of the municipal component of this, there is provincial money going into this but it's not through this department. It's provincial funding but it does not come out of this department, so I can't help you on this.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you again for that, Mr. Deputy Chair, and for the minister.

My last set of questions.

Would the minister agree that as roadwork is done in Manitoba, that that is a good opportunity to also develop electric vehicle infrastructure?

*(15:50)

Mr. Pedersen: Well, I thank the member for that question regarding electric vehicles because—I myself don't know much about electric vehicles. I think one of the first questions that always comes is how far—how many kilometres will it go between charging stations and so how many times do I have to plug it in before I get home, but I understand the policy. And are the—the technological developments are really coming fast on this, so—but I would have to defer the member to Sustainable Development on this because it's Sustainable Development that is working on the climate change policy and this would be part of that—developing infrastructure for that. And, also, Growth, Enterprise and Trade—it's part of the energy policy group that they are developing in order to make—come up with policy in regards to energy use and whatnot.

And, you know, our government also has a 10-point agenda on things like technology—part of the 10-point agenda is a technology innovation portion of this. So these are all interesting things. I look forward to the day when I can drive an electric vehicle and not have to stop at the gas station. And, no matter what the weather, too, there is weather issues with this, given our extreme climate, particularly in the winter. And—but, you know, it

wasn't that many years ago this wasn't even thought about. So the departments are working on this, and—but, to get more where the policy is at and whatnot, you'd have to talk to both Sustainable Development and to GET.

Mr. Altemeyer: I thank the minister for that. And thanks to the additional staff that came in to help with that clarification.

So just to be—just so I have it straight, the minister's infrastructure budget, this year, doesn't have any allocations towards electric vehicle infrastructure, and Sustainable Development would be the department that I would need to direct those questions to.

Did I hear him right?

Mr. Pedersen: So, currently, the Department of Infrastructure is not actively developing infrastructure to accommodate electric vehicles across Manitoba.

That's not to say that it won't happen down the road. And, as these other two departments—Sustainable Development and Growth, Enterprise and Trade—come up with these policies—if it's deemed that the infrastructure should be including in this in—under their plans, I'm sure it will. It is up-and-coming technology and, you know, you look at transportation industry, as a whole, it's changed dramatically in the last number of years. And that's not to say that infrastructure won't be doing that in the future, but currently, right now, for this year, there's nothing in the budget for—to accommodate electric vehicles on the highway system.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): First of all, since I'm in to—Estimates with the Infrastructure Minister for the first time, I want to congratulate him on his appointment, of course. And I know that's always a nice personal moment. I also know it's a nice moment for his family as well. And so I want to let him know that—or, at least, to congratulate him on his appointment. I know that that's a big moment in anyone's life.

He is also familiar, of course, that, before the budget came out, the Finance Minister said that he'd found—or, I guess, maybe on budget day—found \$122 million in savings. And then it turned out to be \$108-million cuts, and that included, you know, \$44 million for the cuts to the seniors' tax rebate, a \$35-million cut to prevention funds, \$9-billion cut to education.

And then, in addition to that, was a budget item—or, an item in the government press release says, amortization reductions related to revised forecasts and capital, the result of projects not proceeding as quickly as estimated in 2015-16 and a reduced level of capital spending approved for 2016-17 to allow for return on investment implementation within strategic infrastructure investment. And that was calculated at \$11 million. We know that, if you calculate that \$11 million in amortization, we're actually talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, over time.

So could the minister tell us today what capital projects he cancelled under that particular item in the government press release?

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you for the compliment. That's one of those moments when the general public doesn't see we really can be human back and forth in this place, it's not all aggressive.

I just—I want to make something very clear here and that is that all the tendered—okay, in terms of highway infrastructure, and I say highway and it's highways and bridges, yes, highway infrastructure—the contracts are put out. The work is advertised in November and December. The contracts are tendered in January-February and awarded. And that's something that started a number of years ago at the urging of the construction industry so that they know for sure what they can take on. So all awarded construction contracts, the work that was tendered in January-February, that's all continuing. None of that is—has been reduced.

Where it has changed is that in the tendering process Manitoba Infrastructure got some really good prices from the existing tendered contracts, and it's resulted in cost savings on individual projects. And again, the member is quite well aware, we've been in business here for nine weeks, this all happened before we came into office, these tenders were awarded. Had there been a budget produced prior to the election, this savings would have showed up in there. So it's—there was cost savings just from the existing tendered contracts.

*(16:00)

What that does, though, is it allows us some flexibility to tender additional work as the year progresses. If we have a very good construction season so that work, the contractors can complete work and there's been instances where the contractor has finished up, has got some room or some time to

do another, you know, smaller project before they move—and I'm talking about an asphalt plant and that type of thing, and trucks and equipment and people involved. If it's feasible for them to do another small project before they move to their next major project, what's happened in the past is the Infrastructure Department has tendered that project—has extended that contract out at the same price to do an additional number of kilometres of road.

So what we're doing right now is we're reviewing and prioritizing all the projects. We will have to wait and see how the construction season rolls out in order to see whether we can, in fact, tender out some more projects within the budget that's there. And so this is an ongoing process. I just want to reiterate, though, that all awarded construction contracts are continuing. And, again, think about the calendar here, because these things—these contracts were tendered out in February prior to us coming into government. So we're honouring all existing contracts, and we're looking forward to another very aggressive construction season.

Mr. Allum: Well, I thank the minister for the answer. I take it that he's grudgingly admitting that those \$11 million in savings happened while we were in government, and he probably never would have admitted it at that time, but I think I just heard him say that, and so I'll take that compliment that he just gave us across the floor. In fact, it suggests that while the government, while in opposition, made tendering a big deal, it looked like—sounds far from the things that we're actually doing—great things in tendering that it's saving the people of Manitoba money. And for that, I compliment the staff for their work in making sure that Manitoba has a high standard of tendering processes which I just heard the minister say that has resulted in saving considerable money, all of which, really, go back to our time in government. And as he said, he's only been in government for nine weeks, so he can hardly take credit for it, though I'm sure at some date in the future, he'll try to, and we'll hold him to account for that.

I think I also heard the minister say that no project had been cancelled. I think I heard him say that. So I'll leave that alone. It might be handy to have a list of what those projects are, but maybe they show up somewhere, but I personally don't have it. I wonder if he's able to table a list for us of all the projects that will be undertaken, as he said, for the upcoming year, so that we can make sure that, in

fact, nothing has been cancelled or delayed. Is that something he's able to provide?

Mr. Pedersen: A couple things. I am—my department is telling me that overall, in the overall government and across all governments, the interest and amortization actually went down last year. But that was because there was a number of major projects that were not completed, that were supposed to have been completed that were not completed. None of those were in the Infrastructure Department. So that's why there is, before you take too much credit for things, you know, cost savings, that's why—is because these projects weren't completed.

Going now to the tendered and awarded list, it is on the department's website. If the member wants to check that out, if he's got problems finding it, just get back to me and I'll make sure it's there. But the complete list of awarded—or tendered and awarded contracts are on there.

Mr. Allum: I thank the minister for that.

That's right, the information would obviously be there. So we'll go have a look at that, we'll print it off and then we'll hold him to account in the future.

The minister will also know that the repeal of the balanced budget legislation that was tabled in the House, I think just last week, removed the requirement to report on the core infrastructure plan.

So my question is quite simple to the minister: How are we to know if he's spending his money and what he's spending it on if the requirement for the core infrastructure plan has been removed?

* (16:10)

Mr. Pedersen: Well, I guess the difference will be the transparency and accountability that's been our pledge all along and that we will continue to do.

In Budget 2016, Manitoba Budget 2016, which is available on the Internet as well, as long as I don't have to find it for you, you'll that—[interjection] Yes, we won't talk about my Internet skills here.

But it is—our, you know, the budget documents—a Strategic Infrastructure 2016/17, Core Government Infrastructure, which is Roads, Highways, Bridges, Flood Protection and Parks, this chart, and then it breaks it down. And then you've got Core Government Infrastructure Total; it's just over \$1 billion. And then there's other infrastructure, under other departments, but we're dealing with

infrastructure, here. So let's deal with this—just over the \$1 billion.

We will—we have every intention—you know, the vast majority of this work is already tendered out. If mother nature gets in the way and decides to snow in the middle of August and we can't get any more paving done or whatever, well, obviously that's going to affect it. But why would we—when this work is tendered out, those companies have been awarded those contracts. They're going to get them done, and this will happen.

And so I'd—and, obviously, we will—you know, in our pledge for transparency, that—if this doesn't happen, Manitobans have every right to know that. But I'm sort of failing to see where the member's logic is in this, in that, if it's—the vast majority of this has been tendered out, and, as I've already explained, there is additional tendering to go out, as work is available, as contractors are available. So we have the commitment to spend this on infrastructure.

We realize the infrastructure deficit that's out there, so, you know, I—maybe if the member missed the conversation I had with the member from Flin Flon is that, when the maintenance budget was slashed, approximately six years ago, that's really hurt our infrastructure. And, unfortunately, when the maintenance wasn't there, we now have to—maintenance and preservation money wasn't spent on that. Now we have to go into capital program, which is far more expensive, but it's just the necessary, and it's part of this infrastructure deficit that we've inherited. It's nothing new for all governments and jurisdictions across Canada.

But, again, in Manitoba, we're in a somewhat unique position where, when the maintenance budget was cut five, six years ago, that's really hurt us, and we need to be spending this money, because we realize the importance of infrastructure in order for the economy as a whole.

We're an economy that depends on our highway system, and we need to get this up and running. And, through effective tendering, which I know the department is, rightfully so, very proud of that they've been tendering these major contracts—highway contracts. There's a few other spots within the department that's—wasn't quite so good at tendering, and Tiger Dams comes to mind. But, if the member wants to ask me about Tiger Dams, I would certainly love to have that conversation.

And—but we're just fully committed to spending this money, and we will do what's right for Manitoba and be accountable to Manitobans.

Mr. Allum: I guess, you know, this is a government that has advertised itself as open and accountable. And yet, at every turn, we have nothing but secrecy.

You know, you want to know why you're not raising the minimum wage?—won't tell us. Why aren't you joining in a CPP plan that every province but Quebec is involved in? You won't tell us. He's got a secret audit—the Finance Minister's undertaken a secret audit of the—of government services across the board. The tender says, right in that audit, it will be confidential and secret.

So, when the minister says I'm not sure why the member is asking about a legislated requirement to report on something that suddenly disappeared from a repealed act, you have to wonder just how open and accountable the minister intends to be when the requirement to report on it suddenly disappears.

So, you know, if he's wondering now, I think he understands precisely where we're going with this. We want to know how exactly he is going to be open and transparent and how he is going to report on the expenditures, especially capital expenditures in his department, and we're seeing, at every turn, those reporting mechanisms being either eliminated or deleted, and so it's quite within our realm to ask how he's going to report on it so Manitobans, including members of this Chamber, will know that—how money is being spent and how—what projects are being cancelled and what underspending is happening.

We saw this in the '90s with the Filmon government. We are worried about it again as we move on with the new government, and so it's a legitimate question for us to ask.

I have just one other question I'd like to ask the minister and he may—it may not be within his purview but in—on November 30th, 2015, CBC media reported that the City and the Province had assembled a joint task force to investigate the viability of an electric transit system in Winnipeg. Representatives of that task force included the Province, Manitoba Hydro, the bus manufacturer New Flyer, Red River College was also part of that task force.

So, is the plan to—has that task force reported, and is there a plan going forward to electrify the bus fleet in Winnipeg, so that we can address climate

change issues here and at the same time create green jobs for Manitobans, which is what our government had committed to? I've never heard the word green job come out of the government yet and, frankly, job creations, it's something that's hard to find.

So I'm wondering if the minister could just share with us what the status of that task force was and if his government is committing to implementing the recommendations of that task force.

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: I heard that little sermon about transparency and accountability coming from the member and I'm—as he's saying that I'm thinking Tiger Dams, severance payments, hydro work for votes and OCN and a leadership contest, so I don't think there should be any preaching from the NDP about transparency.

So the quick answer to his question about reporting on infrastructure spending, The Financial Administration Act has quarterly—we were required, and he would know this—that the government is required to put out quarterly reports, and all spending within Infrastructure would be in those quarterly reports, but then I guess I'm thinking back that it seemed to be those quarterly reports were really slow coming out from the previous government. So I guess that's another place that we will have to improve transparency in and trying to get those out quicker.

* (16:20)

As far as his task force question, I am informed that this department has nothing to do with that task force, and that would be Indigenous and Municipal Relations, if they are—even if they're involved, but it definitely, to my knowledge, is not within the purview of Infrastructure, so ask IMR if they're involved in this.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Like to ask the minister a few questions regarding his department here, and I congratulated him yesterday on his appointment to the ministry. Minister's—the minister's refused to provide details of exactly what the impacts are going to be from cutting the highways program by \$48 million, and we want to understand that this is one of the biggest cuts in the first budget by this Conservative government. It's a very big concern to us because we have a very—Manitoba has a very ambitious—or had a very ambitious capital program. Want to understand as well that the minister has not been putting facts on the record about what has

happened in terms of investments in highway infrastructure in this province.

I'd like to ask the minister to put on the record how much the actual capital budget for investment in highways has increased over the last two years. So how much has the actual capital budget for investment in highways increased over the last two calendar years?

Mr. Pedersen: What the member is conveniently not talking about is that the Infrastructure budget was the only department—Infrastructure department was the only department that underspent every year except in an election year, and underspent by an average of 27 per cent, while almost every other department overspent, contributing to this billion-dollar deficit that we have—find ourselves in right now.

So, the member can try to pat himself on the back for increasing the capital budget in the year of an election, but really, it's about this raid-raid-raid-and-then-parade Infrastructure spending plan that the previous government loved to do. And, if he had been in—you know, if he was listening in on a conversation with the member from Flin Flon talking about the condition of the roads, then he'd know that the maintenance budget was cut six years ago, and when you cut the maintenance and preservation budget—when you don't spend money on maintenance and preservation, the roads deteriorate that much faster. In fact, they compound deteriorate year after year when you don't put this money into maintenance and preservation.

So, you know, the member can try and pat himself on the back all he wants about an election budget, but we also know that this government was famous for making promises and not carrying through on them. And Manitobans overwhelmingly understood that on April 19th. So he can try to claim all he wants but, in reality, we're—this government now is left with a tremendous infrastructure deficit from this, years of underspending, not only budgeting less, but then underspending, which, again, compounds the problems of maintenance and preservation.

So, you know, we're faced with some real challenges here, something like 19,000 kilometres of roads and 3,000-plus bridges and major culverts that are needing some serious, serious work, and all across the province, whether it's in the North, the east, the west, south, wherever you go in Manitoba, we're finding the same problems.

So, you know, this is a challenge that this government has had. We've put out our commitment to spend \$1 billion-plus; it's in my mandate letter from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that we'll spend this, but what we're going to do, though, is get better value from it, from the money spend. Strategic infrastructure, which means a return on investment and getting value for money on the contracts that we do put out, and when you are building these roads that there is a return back to the Manitoba economy, which will help build the economy, and that's something that this previous government didn't do, and that it's a challenge that we're faced with right now.

So we will work hard on this. You know, we can only—we have to work with the budget that we were basically handed this year. We could only make minor changes to it in the time spent. The previous government had time to bring in a budget, but chose not to, and they—and now Manitobans are getting the true numbers out there that this government continued to hide and—because we realize the deficit was something in the \$400-million range, and then it sort of drifted up to 666, and then, you know, it ends up at \$1 billion. So, but funny how that is; the NDP did not want to come clean before the election on this, and instead they chose to wait, keep Manitobans in the dark, as it was, on what the real costs of it was.

So the Infrastructure Department will do its best to fix up the roads and the condition that we found ourselves in, but we will do this.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Chairman, well, it's pretty sad that the minister can't answer a basic question like that.

My question was about how much was the actual capital budget for highway investment? How much has it increased over the last two years? I mean, surely, he could provide that answer without taking five minutes of time to provide a non-answer.

Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to ask the minister to explain the fact that we've had a record construction season over the last two years, building on an already high, historic investment in infrastructure. Like to ask the minister if he could indicate how much paving was done this past construction season and the previous construction season and, in fact, that these were record amounts, the past two years in—of paving seasons.

* (16:30)

Mr. Pedersen: Amongst the many incredulous promises that the NDP did—and what was there, \$600 million for the promises in the last election? Now they're taking credit for the good construction weather in 2015. The construction season was able to start earlier last year because of the weather. It had nothing to do with the NDP, even though they want to claim it was their management. And the construction season went well last year because of the weather. There was very few rain delays, and it actually went into late October. And—case the member doesn't know, asphalt is very temperature sensitive and it has—the ambient temperature has to remain high before you can actually lay asphalt.

Now, if the member wants to take credit for the weather last year, that's good. I think it has a lot more to do with it was an election year in terms of deciding how much contracts they would put out. Now, these contracts would have been put out in—would have been advertised in 2014, in the fall of 2014, and then they would've been tendered out in early 2015, and right in time for an election year. And obviously, you know—and the—they—I know the NDP weren't very lucky in the last election, and I don't know how much luck has to do with it, but, you know, there was a bit of a revolt happening within the NDP, and yet they still managed to be blessed with good weather so that they could delay the election instead of calling it in the fall. They pushed it off 'til the spring because I think they were having some internal problems. They were trying to decide, you know, who would actually lead the party and who would guarantee the most votes to which union boss.

And now for the member to come up with the idea that he's going to take credit for a long construction season because, quite frankly, the very opposite could have happened. We could have had a wet, rainy, cold year and now—and then the member wouldn't be asking me these questions because Mother Nature went against him. But to be able to claim that they can now control the weather is pretty amazing. But then, after spending a number of years in here and listening to NDP promises and press—and watching press releases, nothing really surprises me anymore.

And so the member for the Louise Bridge is now claiming that he has control over the weather and they can do a—just a bang-up job of laying asphalt on our highway system. And—while conveniently forgetting about—and the member from Flin Flon was talking about Road 359, you know, about how

terrible shape it is, and, you know, on one hand, the NDP claims, you know, all this progress on one side but conveniently forgets about maintenance and preservation budget, which has really hurt our highway system all across this province. And so the member, you know, it's good. He can claim to have control over the weather. I think there's a few farmers out there that would like his magical powers for that.

So—but in the meantime, we will be very transparent about this, and our government will look at infrastructure strategically and how best to move Manitoba forward on a return on investment and making sure that we get these competitive tenders out there and competitive bids and in allowing those construction companies to be able to ramp up to have the equipment to have the people power to run their equipment and so that they're geared up and ready to do infrastructure on a consistent basis, not on a raid, raid, raid and then a parade just before the next election.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we continue, I just want to remind the minister that when you refer to the other member, to refer to him as their constituency name, not by the member for Louise Bridge. Thank you.

Mr. Maloway: You know, I asked the member to tell us how much paving, very simple question, how much paving was done this past construction season and the previous construction season, and to confirm that these were actual record amounts. And he spent five minutes—five minutes; he's got staff in front of him who are providing him the answers to very simple questions about the amount of the paving that was done in each of the last two years and whether in fact those were record amounts. And he has staff there, they provide him with the answers, and he takes him five minutes and still doesn't even come close to answering our question. That is not a sign of a transparent government in any way, shape or form, Mr. Chairman.

And, you know something, I, Mr. Chairman, I have no problem with him calling me the member for Louise Bridge because the more publicity we get on the need for the replacement of Louise Bridge I am very happy about all that. I really liked the—turn on my TV and see that CTV with a hundred thousand viewers is once again pushing the need for the replacement of the Louise Bridge, they can do that as many days a week as they want. So I do appreciate the free publicity and he's certainly welcome in my

books to keep calling me whatever he wants as long as he mentions the Louise Bridge every once in a while.

So, Mr. Chairman, these are important questions that we've been asking here. The government is still collecting, you know, after all the fuss they made about the 1 per cent, misrepresenting it, saying that it was \$1,600 out of every household when in fact it's like three or four hundred dollars out of an average household, and, I mean, only the Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself would be, you'd have to be spending \$160,000 a year in GSTable items to be paying \$1,600. So, a gross misrepresentation, and they were successful, I guess, in doing that for a number of years.

The fact of the matter is, though, that in spite of all of this, they are still collecting this money. This government is collecting this one cent on the dollar, and in fact, what have they done? Not only are they still collecting it, but they've actually cut the amount of money that they've committed to the infrastructure budget by \$48 million. So that's pretty good, you get a big raise, you get a raise in your revenue and then, and you turned around and you cut your spending where the revenue is supposed to be committed to.

So thus far the minister has refused to say how much will be committed to all-weather road construction, now that the East Side Road Authority has been moved back into his department. And aside from his talking points about whether it's right or not to move the East Side Road Authority under MIT, this very simple question: What will the capital budget be for all-weather road construction within your government department?

Mr. Pedersen: I will take your admonishment about—the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway); I will make sure I always refer to him as the member for Elmwood.

But it does remind me, though, that noticing his election signs, he actually covered up the NDP on the election signs, so I, you know—very, must be very ashamed of, you know, to try and claim all this great things for the NDP but he actually covered up the NDP on his signs. So we thought it was pretty humorous, actually. And you needed a microscope to see if it was authorized by the official agent, but you know, microscopes work too, so whatever. I just, maybe it's different in Elmwood, I'm not familiar with that part of town.

* (16:40)

So, referring back to a previous question he had, I can get the member the tonnage of asphalt for the 2015 construction season if he would like that, we've got staff that can get that for me, and if I don't get it for him before closing today, I can get it to him tomorrow. And so that will alleviate—or I guess it will build up his case for all the road construction that happened last year, again, keeping in mind the weather influence on there. Again, I'm more than happy to talk about all-weather roads and—as it relates to the building of the roads on the east side, untangling that mess that the NDP created with the East Side Road Authority and the secrecy involved in that was—which is what we continue to try and untangle. So we'll continue on that.

But, as I stated before, when the member asked about all-weather roads, we have clearly stated, and it's in the budget. I previously told the member from Flin Flon, the budget for 2016 is \$70 million for all-weather roads, and the only all-weather roads we are currently building right now are on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

So the rest of that ESRA budget is what the NDP loved to build, and it was called bureaucracy and that's—bureaucracy doesn't build roads. And we're going to use that money to build our road system, through the department, who has the expertise to do these things. We didn't need a top-secret organization that was not accountable to taxpayers, that was called the East Side Road Authority.

And so we're going to continue to build all-weather roads. We will, as we move forward, we'll be bringing out further construction—or further plans on roads and bridges. We've got a tremendous deficit in this province, of the roads and bridges, and we're going work on that to bring them in, because we know how the economy hinges, in Manitoba, on our road system. And our—so it's vitally important to the economy in Manitoba, and we'll—we will be open and transparent about this, unlike the previous government.

Mr. Scott Johnston, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Maloway: You know, the previous government had a very ambitious highway capital program, and we saw construction, over the last number of years, huge amounts of construction. We all saw very significant commitments to major projects all over the province, and it's a very simple question to this minister is: What is this minister going to cut now that he has \$48 million less in this highway capital program?

Mr. Pedersen: Again, I will repeat that there is nothing being cut out of this budget. We will find significant savings in not having to sole source and put up Steady Growth signs. I saw—someone had actually added on those—what was it?—Steady Growth—

An Honourable Member: —in taxes.

Mr. Pedersen: —in taxes, and Good Jobs—

An Honourable Member: —in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Pedersen: —in Saskatchewan. And so that—like, that sign just had to come down right away.

That's a—so, you know, self-promotional advertising doesn't build roads. Secrecy within ESRA doesn't build roads. I've already tried to explain, but, I guess, either the member doesn't understand or doesn't want to listen, that the budget remains the same as the—as per what has been, I understand, has been done before, as the construction season progresses, as there is ability to do more work, it will be tendered out where it makes sense to do so, where the construction company can do that.

And, again, I'll use the example of a construction company finishing a set project and having some time to do some more before they have to move asphalt equipment and people and equipment to the next project. If they're able to do some more work there, we would certainly entertain extending that contract at the same price to get a little bit more work done to make it more efficient for the company. And the bids have been very competitive over the—for this construction season. And that has given us some extra value in terms—when the member calls it a cut, it's actually, we're getting better value from these tenders. And so that's going to allow us to do more work.

So, you know, there's a construction season coming, or we're into it now, and we hope to see—it would be great if we could have as—another year as good as last year, weather-wise. And I'm not sure if the NDP can manage that in opposition, as they seem to be able to think they could manage it in government, so we'll wait and see how that one turns out. You know, it is blue skies in Manitoba now, so we're quite happy with that. But we'll see how the season progresses.

I just want to keep reiterating there's not cuts to the department. It's cost savings that will be—allow us to do more work as the season progresses, weather permitting and contractors being available to do this.

Mr. Maloway: Well, we have specific concerns about the impact of this government cuts on the highway capital program and, in fact, they will not commit to key projects.

I want to stress one thing, and that is we will continue to ask about projects in northern Manitoba, because we're well into historic investments in projects in northern Manitoba. And we can't forget those days, those good, old days when the Conservatives were in government, before they cut the amount of money going to northern highway capital projects. And there was one point where they were as little as \$5 million put into northern highways.

And northerners know this, that whenever there's been a Conservative government in, I think back to the Sterling Lyon government, and it didn't take long before Ken MacMaster won Thompson, I recall, by just a few votes, maybe 50, something like that. And, you know, within a couple years, the North were totally fed up with the Conservatives, and they were cutting back, shutting down projects that Schreyer government had been putting into effect. So, you know, we know what the history's been with Conservative governments over at least the last couple of times they've been in office.

Every year, Mr. Chairman, that we've been in office, we've exceeded by as much as 20 or 30 times. We've invested in highways like Highway 373, 374. In fact, we've now seen that the investments in those highways are almost totally completed. We made major investments in Highway 6, Highway 10, other northern highways. We made major commitments in Highway 280. And, in fact, it's always—it's already started major construction to upgrade that highway and put in the place the contract to surface the road into Split Lake. We made major commitments into other areas, including improving access to Moose Lake and into Nelson House. A lot of this was accomplished, but we clearly identified our plan to do more.

This minister has less money in the highway capital program than the previous minister did.

So the simple question that I would have to ask is: What highway projects in northern Manitoba is this government and this minister committed to? And what projects will they be cutting? Can he give me a list of those?

* (16:50)

Mr. Pedersen: Well, I like simple questions, because the simple question here is—seated down two seats from him is the member from Flin Flon, who was just telling me about the poor condition of 395.

Now, we've been in government for nine weeks. The road didn't fall apart in the last nine weeks. This is a lack of maintenance and preservation that this member is conveniently forgetting about. If you had maintained these roads, if you had done preservation on these roads—the member asked—from Flin Flon, asked about the road into—from—into Flin Flon. *[interjection]* Bakers Narrows. Bakers Narrows into Flin Flon. Sorry, I forgot about which town it was.

If they had preserved that highway for the last 17 years, it probably wouldn't need to be doing a capital rebuild on it right now, which costs much more than maintenance and preservation. So, for the member to go on about—make accusations about what we will or what we won't do when all he has to do is look back at the last 17 years and how the roads in Manitoba have fallen apart because they've deliberately underspent the infrastructure budget. They deliberately cut the maintenance and preservation budget on highways.

Our local departments don't have a stone of gravel to put on the shoulders to fix up our PR roads. They even had to cut the mowing in the ditches in the last number of years. And I realize—and I think, maybe, I've figured out why they've cut the mowing in the ditches, because now there trees are growing in the ditches, and that's to replace the trees that they've taken out for the Bipole III west line—west side waste line, because we've got forests growing in our ditches, now. That's simple maintenance.

But nothing is simple with this previous government. It was all about shows, about raiding the department for years and then getting up closer to an election and then, suddenly, they're going to spend all this money—or, claim they're going to spend all this money. And, with a little fortune from Mother Nature last year, they actually did have a good year, which was—although they claim to take that.

So, you know, the member needs to get with the times and look at the road conditions where they are this spring. And that did not happen in the last nine years. They're an absolute disaster across the entire province. I could take you down anywhere in this province and take you on some roads that are not passable, they're not safe. And this affects safety. And it affects all of Manitoba. It affects

transportation of goods across Manitoba. You're impeding on the movement of goods and services across Manitoba.

So don't try and give us a lesson about what we did.

And I was not here during the Sterling Lyon years. Maybe the member from Elmwood was here during the Sterling Lyon years. Good on him if he's been here that long and he's got a photographic memory of what happened the years—but you don't need much of a memory to realize the mess that this government has created in the last 17 years. And, now, Manitobans made the decision on April 19th to change governments, and we are going to do a better job.

Mr. Maloway: Clearly, the minister could have said the same thing in, probably, 10 seconds, rather than taking five minutes.

Now, you know, Mr. Chairman, not only did the Conservatives cut investments in northern infrastructure when they were in government in the past; they went so far as to campaign in opposition to shift highway expenditures out of the north into the south. And they'll remember when they said that.

They defined northern Manitoba as north of Riding Mountain, and we're particularly concerned about this given the fact that there's not a single Cabinet minister north of Riding Mountain. And, in fact, this minister continues to refuse to commit to badly needed investments in infrastructure in northern Manitoba.

I'd like to ask this minister—ask him to take this opportunity in Estimates to indicate what northern projects will this government be cutting because of this government's lack of investment in the capital program due to its \$48-million cut. And they clearly—their clearly stated intention of Conservatives to move highway expenditures out of the north and into the south.

Mr. Pedersen: I'm not sure whether it's just the length of time one spends in this illustrious Chamber or what it is, but how you view your—the member made a number of accusations about previous governments, and I'm not interested in that. They could say what they like, and truth was never a real strong criteria for the NDP, so we'll leave it at that.

I want the member to realize, though, 10 per cent of the road system in Manitoba is located in the North; 10 per cent of the road network is located in

the North. In the early years of the previous administration, they mandated 25 per cent capital road expenditures, capital—and I'm assuming they did some maintenance back then, but who knows whether they did. Twenty-five per cent was mandated for northern roads. That's not going to happen this time. It's not going to be moved into area specifics. It—road maintenance, road preservation, road capital will be based on the entire province no matter where it is, and it will be based on return-on-investment strategic infrastructure because that's what grows Manitoba.

I also like to just remind the member, and I believe it was the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) that brought it up, Moose Lake Road was never approved by the previous administration. Lots of talk about it. They loved to talk about how they were going to fix this road. It never was on the capital program, so you have to be careful not to accuse us of withdrawing projects. We can't withdraw a project that was never approved in the first place. This road, like every other road in Manitoba, will be looked at as we go forward, and, again, it's on strategic returns, return on investment, which is how business runs and that's how it should be on—that's how government should run too. It's not about where—whose constituency it is; it's what's based on—best for Manitoba.

* (17:00)

I also like to just inform the member that if he was talking about his sunshine program for last year, for 2015, the total tonnage of asphalt completed last year was 1.45 million metric tons. So that—it was a good year. And, again, I'm sure that the NDP will claim they directed the weather to be able to do that. So that was his question before; there's his answer. And we'll wait to see what he asks next.

Mr. Maloway: You know, the member has essentially told us that he's going to follow the pattern of the previous Filmon and Lyon governments in starving the North of road construction because he said just—he just said that 10 per cent—that in the NDP years, he said, that 25 per cent of the provincial capital for roads went to the North. And he—and they only have, up North, 10 per cent of all the roads. So they were spending—NDP was spending 25 per cent of all the road capital on an area with, like, 10 per cent of the roads. So now he's going to make this proportional, so, therefore, what is going to happen is rather than 25 per cent of capital being spent up North, it's going

to drop to 10 per cent, which is the North's share of the roads system. That's what he just said, right?

So I just want to ask the member: Is that what he said, or is he going to change his story here?

Mr. Pedersen: I would encourage the member to read Hansard tomorrow because he just made up—tried to make up things—well, he did make up—the member did make up things that he is accusing me of which I, you know, really don't appreciate. If he would listen, I never said anything of the sort of what he's accusing me of. But that's fine. I understand he's been around for a while and so he's got—maybe he's just got seniority in this place to make it up as he goes, and that's his prerogative.

So what he needs to remember is that this—the road system throughout Manitoba, including the North, including the east side, needs to be built. And as a government, we will look at all roads across Manitoba, no matter where you live, because there's an economic return justification that you can make for any road and a safety issue that you can make for any road.

So if the—you know, I'm not going to change the member's mind. He's got his mind made up of what he's going to say, and good for him. I—more power to him. But what he needs to remember is that Manitobans didn't believe the stories that he was telling, that he's trying to tell now. The Manitobans had the final say on April 19th, and he can continue to try and tell Manitobans a certain story that he may or may not believe, but Manitobans know better, and Manitobans are asking for—Manitobans asked for a change and got a change, a much more responsible, much more open and transparent government because they just really got—Manitobans got fed up with the promises and the lack of credibility that this former government had, and it's, you know—look, half their caucus didn't believe them, the NDP caucus. They couldn't even agree amongst themselves what they were saying or doing within their own caucus. No wonder Manitobans didn't believe them.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

So they can continue, and I know that my colleagues and I have travelled extensively throughout the entire province, and I really don't think it's helpful for the member to try segregate off—play one part of the province off on another. We're the government for all of Manitoba, no matter where you live, no matter what your socio-economic

position is. We have a lot of work to do in Manitoba. We inherited quite a mess out of this government, and Infrastructure is no different, and we will continue to—early days right now, so we're going to continue to untangle some of the messes in there.

Been really pleased with the staff that I've thus far managed to meet within the Infrastructure Department. I look forward to meeting many more of them as we're able to travel the province over the summer, because their heart is in the right place. They want to do what's best for Manitoba, and so how do we enable them to be able to do that? And that's what they're—that's what Manitobans are counting on and that's what we will do.

Mr. Maloway: Well, Mr. Chairman, I mean, he's forgot what he said just 10 minutes ago. We were listening to his response to the question and he clearly said that the road network in Manitoba—if the road network in Manitoba—10 per cent of the roads are in the North. Did he say that? Yes, he did.

And he said that the NDP, when we were in—NDP was in government, we spent 25 per cent of the capital budget on those 10 per cent of the roads of the province, those roads in the North, and that that couldn't continue in the future. So, what he's saying is he's going to cut northern road construction by, well, from now 25 per cent back down to their proportionate share of 10. Now, if he can't remember what he said just 10 minutes ago, how do we expect him to be running a huge department like this?

Mr. Pedersen: Well, there used to be a commentary on the radio that I used to listen to every day, and it was, and, now, the rest of the story.

An Honourable Member: Paul Harvey.

Mr. Pedersen: Paul Harvey, that's who it was, Paul Harvey, and now the rest of the story.

In the early days of the NDP administration, after they became government in 1999, they mandated 25 per cent of all road construction at the cost of all other Manitoba was to be done in the North. For the last about eight—the last eight to 10 years, the road construction budget of Manitoba Infrastructure was—for the North, was about 10 per cent. So, I'm—if we maintain—when we maintain the same structure as what the previous government did—and, as we say, strategic infrastructure, if they have 10 per cent of the roads, they should get 10 per cent of the budget. That's the way it works. So we would actually—we will be actually be spending the same amount as the NDP,

so I'm not quite sure where he gets off on this cutting, you know, or reducing budgets or anything.

* (17:10)

The—where we will be able to do even more roads and bridges all across the province, including the North, is by continuing to do strategic tendering, doing strategic analysis of which roads we get good return on, so what, when you fix a road up, you get economic development happening along that, and that's important no matter where you live in Manitoba.

And, again, I really—I think it's important to realize that we're all Manitobans and that everybody gains when you do—everyone in Manitoba will gain when you do strategic infrastructure based on return on investment. Which, you know, if you took some of the money—if we could go, and the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) loves to go back in history—I wouldn't necessarily call him a history buff, but he does like to go back in history.

If we were to take the money that was wasted in the bureaucracy that they formed through the Red River Floodway and through the East Side Road Authority, if we could take some of that money that was spent in paying off their friends, if we took some of the money that was used in undisclosed severance payments to NDP supporters of the previous leader, if we took some of the wasted money from the Tiger Dams, untendered contracts from the Tiger Dams, and promising votes to a First Nation in—or, promising work to a First Nation in return for votes—if we took all that money, think of how many more miles of roads we could have built in the North, in the south, in the east, in the west of Manitoba.

But, now that—you know, we—unlike the NDP, we're not—we can't magically pull that money back, and we're not going to spend time reinventing history. Instead, we will—we're going to move forward with Manitoba and make sure that we get Manitoba back on track. And our goal is to be the most improved province in the next four years. And this department will have a huge impact on doing that.

Mr. Maloway: You know, after two successive attempts, here, for him to explain what he just forgot 10 minutes ago, it's left us even, I think, more confused.

But, I mean, what he clearly said was 10 per cent of the road network is in the North, the NDP had mandated that 25 per cent of the budget was

supposed to be spent on those 10 per cent of the roads, and he was going to change all that. Which means that northern roads are going to get a huge reduction in attention under this government, which is similar to what happened in the Lyon government, similar to what happened in the Filmon government. There's no mystery about this.

And, like I said, that's what he said. And he can try to backtrack all he wants. And I'm sure the Premier (Mr. Pallister) will be getting involved here very quickly trying to, you know, correct this mess that he's creating for himself and the government. But, you know, time will tell just where these expenditures—how they pan out on behalf of this government.

Now, I want to ask the member—the minister. One of the areas that we have put a lot of work into has been flood mitigation in this province. In fact, we invested in excess of \$1 billion in flood mitigation. This includes the investment in the floodway expansion, the diking in the Red River Valley and significant projects throughout the rest of the province. In response to the 2011 flood, we put in place a major commitment to improve flood mitigation, starting with the Lake St. Martin outlets and the Lake Manitoba outlets. It's also important to note that we had started the construction of the Lake St. Martin emergency outlet in 2011.

I want to stress, again, that we put in place the engineering work. We'd already contracted the federal government in terms of the environmental and other necessary approvals. We were in discussions with First Nations about the potential for community benefit agreements, which is very important, these community benefit agreements which, as the member does not seem to understand or support, and other ways of partnering in the construction of the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin outlets.

We'd like to know: What is the status of the engineering design work on these projects?

Mr. Pedersen: First of all, I just want to say that the time for coffee parties is over. The previous government loved having coffee parties and calling that progress.

In my mandate letter from the Premier, one of my instructions from him—from the Premier was to have an outlet built out of Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin to reduce flooding. And, first of all, this is—all members should realize that, you know, we're

going to get this built with the First Nations around there, with the landowners, with the cottage owners, with the communities, but this is just the first step in flood control.

This channel needs to be built in order to give some secure—to give security to those communities around Lake Manitoba, around Lake St. Martin, so that they're not faced with the threat of being flooded out when we get a big wash of water coming down the Assiniboine.

This does not solve the flooding problems per se because we have to work with Saskatchewan; we have to work with North Dakota. The landowners on the Souris, the Qu'Appelle, the Assiniboine watersheds, we need to have some programs in place or some means of slowing the water down. There's a lot of water. The same amount of water is still coming that always came. The problem, as I understand, is the water's coming that much faster. It comes, instead of months, or—to come down the Assiniboine it's coming down in a matter of days.

So, but we're going to start with this channel and that will, as I said, that will help reduce the flooding around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin and those communities that are affected.

So it is—the engineering is continuing. The outreach is continuing with both this department and IMR department, with the First Nations communities that are around both Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. This—there is consultations going on with the federal government regarding environmental approvals and obviously the Province will have environmental approvals there also.

* (17:20)

So it is proceeding and we just—we have every intention of making this channel come to fruition. There is lots of people and lots of different stakeholders involved and it's about reaching out, rebuilding those relations with people around there. And once the engineering has been completed then we will be seeking both Treasury Board approval to award the contract, and also there is a commitment from the federal government to help fund this, and we need to make sure that that commitment remains there. So that's the latest that I can give you on that, but this is a good first step in a flood management system for across Manitoba.

Mr. Maloway: Well, you know, I'd like to ask the, you know, the question was what's the status of the engineering design work and he kind of doesn't

really know, I guess, that was the indication I got. He doesn't really know where the engineering design work's at.

The question is: Has the route been approved? And the other question, I guess, we would have is: Has the government put in place the process for the required constitutional consultations with the First Nations and Metis peoples? He mentioned absolutely nothing about that.

So I would like to know I—specifically what is the status of the engineering design? Has the route been approved, and have you done any consulting with the First Nations and Metis peoples?

Mr. Pedersen: The department has selected two engineering service providers. There's been two selected through a request for qualification process who now have the opportunity to submit proposals for the preliminary and detailed design and contract administration phases of the project. But before—you can have a route selected, but you need to get the environmental approvals for that once you select a route.

So there—this is a long process; it is moving forward. There is, in terms of consultation with First Nations, Metis, local landowners—that's continuing, and will certainly—everything has to kind of fall in place on this too. You—the previous government loved to have coffee parties and talk broad strokes about what they were going to do, but until—you need to consult with all the groups absolutely but you can only consult with them until you actually know—get closer to where a projected route is because it affects local people on that.

So, you know, we're—we realize that you have to have buy in from the local communities before this will happen, and when I say local communities, I mean the First Nations, the Metis, the landowners. You're not going to go in and bulldoze a route through here—if I can use that metaphor—without consulting them. But there is—there's a lot of moving pieces on this, and we will continue to move ahead on this.

This is a priority, you know, we—the people around Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba don't have any assurance of—that a—you know, if we get a high-water event again that they're facing flooding again, and you can't build—you don't have any confidence in having your home there or your business or your cottage or whatever the case may be if that's there.

So this is a priority item and we will continue to work on this throughout this summer and this fall. We hope to have significant progress in terms of consultation and route design in the next while, although I'm reluctant to put a time frame on that, because, as the pieces fall together, we'll get closer to a solution to this.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the member to give us the names of those two firms that he just mentioned that were successful in obtaining the contracts?

Mr. Pedersen: The two firms are KGS engineering and AECOM, that's A-E-C-O-M engineering. They're prequalified in their request for quotes.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like the minister to give us a specific timetable for the commencement of construction for this Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin outlets. He must have some reasonably specific timelines, given that he has just announced the names or given us the names of two successful contracts.

Mr. Pedersen: The member asks questions he knows that—I can't give him a specific date, and he knows very well that. And I don't know if he wants to play cute or what he's doing, whatever. But in this process, you have the design phase, you need environmental approvals, you have to do consultations with all affected stakeholders.

The previous government had 17 years to do this. And, now, nine weeks into our government, he's expecting me to put a time frame on this.

So, you know, if the member is that good at doing designing and getting environmental approvals done and doing consultations, perhaps he can suggest when all this can be done, because I just cannot give him a start date. As much as I would love to give him a start date, that is not possible. That is not fair to those people who we will be in consultation with, to go out and put a date on this, because why would we have consultations if we're just going to go out and put a start date on it no matter what? And you also realize we've got both federal and provincial environmental assessments that need to be done.

Goodness knows, this previous government loved to tie things up in bureaucracy, and now he's expecting us to pull miracles here. And so I'll give him a start date. The start date will be as soon as possible.

Mr. Maloway: I appreciate his very specific start date.

Now I'd like to know what his very specific completion date is going to be for the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin outlets.

Mr. Pedersen: As soon as possible.

Mr. Maloway: Will this minister and this government be discussing the potential for community benefit agreements for the outlets with the affected First Nations and Metis and will they be looking at other ways to ensure that First Nations and Metis people have maximum employment contract opportunities, specifically the kind of provisions that were placed on the Floodway with the East Side Road Authority that ensured both individual hiring and community benefits for the affected indigenous communities?

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) seemed to indicate that the government was committed to already signed committee benefit, or community benefit agreements on the east side, but today I think the minister suggested that these were under review. So I'd like to know who's right here, the Premier or the minister. Are you going to honour these agreements or are you not?

Mr. Pedersen: Just a clarification, he's—the member started talking about the Lake St. Martin—Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin channel and then switched gears over to East Side Road Authority. He's talking about community benefit agreements, can he be a little more specific in his question. What's he talking about?

Mr. Maloway: Certainly. We would like to know whether the minister would employ the same approach with these outlets that he, that the previous government had with the local people in, on the east side. The community benefit agreements, you know, ensured that there were benefits to the local communities including employment and training, and other benefits to the local people rather than just outside contractors moving in and completing the contract without any obligation to employ the local people.

So this, to me, is going to be a very substantial, fairly expensive project over a period of time, and we want to know whether the local people are going to have some benefits here, similar to what has been currently happening in the last few years on the east-side road, in the east-side road situation.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you for the question because this is an important aspect of not only building this channel, but it's building long-term jobs, long-term

skills for the local communities. You know, there's the consultations about the actual construction of the channels, both out of Lake St. Martin and, or out of Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, but there's also the, there's a construction work related with that but we also need to be doing—offering training so that there's job skills that can be long term. And if they—so what—through this department and IMR we're developing an Aboriginal involvement strategy and it will be tailored around this project but it's also ensuring local economic development continues.

Mr. Chair, I had a very interesting conversation with a person from the Manitoba Construction Sector Council, their organization does a lot of training both in heavy equipment but also in someone's skills training with—it's through Red River, I believe it was. But this is what we're looking to do. This—like I said, there's building the channel to reduce flooding and to build some stability into those communities around Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin. But we also need to use this project to build local economic development. It doesn't do as—it's good in the short term if you hire, in this case, local First Nations people to operate equipment, but they—but we need to make sure that we help them develop the skills so that there's—so whether they start their own companies later on or whether they can go and gain employment when other projects come up around, whether it's in their area or, if they have the skills, workers tend to be very mobile these days to go where the jobs are. So that's—that will be an important component and—of this entire project.

Many people kind of get sidetracked about just, you know, building a ditch to lower water levels. But there is so much more to this, and that really will help a particular—in this case, a particular group that would welcome some skills, some long-term economic outlook—economic development. So we'll—we will work on this very hard and there's—that's—the two components come together. But we need to get the design done; we need to get these environmental reviews under way. And, certainly, we need to get the buy-in of the locals, of all the local people into this project.

Mr. Maloway: There's a little bit of confusion on this point because the minister appears now to be saying that he favours, I guess, community benefit agreements, but he has been—in the past indicated that the community benefit agreements, as far as east-side roads was concerned, were going to be put under review. And the Premier (Mr. Pallister), on the other hand, has said that any agreements that have

been signed will be honoured. So the question here is a little bit of confusion as far as where the government is headed on this, with the Premier saying one thing, the minister saying another. And now the minister's sort of indicating that he might employ the same community benefit agreements in this construction of these outlets.

So, you know, which is it, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Pedersen: I didn't realize the member could get that confused that easily. It's not that confusing. It's fairly simple, actually. We're going to help the local people, give a hand up to the local people on this particular project, whatever shape or form that takes. And that is an equally important component of this as the actual building of the channel.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister about the status of the Freedom Road Shoal Lake 40 First Nation. Just where are things at with that project at the moment?

* (17:40)

Mr. Pedersen: Freedom Road is currently in the design stage. There has been a consultant, was hired to do the original design or initial design of the road. There is—AECOM is the firm doing it; A-E-C-O-M. AECOM. The work's continuing on the design. The department's meeting with the chief and council this Friday. So there's the, you know, the consultation is taking place there. There's—again, there's the First Nations consultations. There's going to be environmental approvals needed. The cost sharing is still one third, one third, one third with the federal government, provincial government and the City of Winnipeg. So there is currently—so the design work will continue and then, from that, then, there will be a cost estimate coming forward.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The question to the minister is very simple, and I was just hoping that we could get this, if not today, maybe tomorrow.

Could the minister please give a list of all the technical staff appointed by order-in-council and assigned to his office, and could the list please include their names and roles in the minister's office?

Mr. Pedersen: Sorry, Mr. Chair.

All right, staff appointed by order-in-council is: Howard May, and that's M-a-y, his last name is spelled, and he is special assistant; I have William Poelstra, P-o-e-n-s-t-r-a, who is my executive assistant, so those are the only two orders-in-council I have.

Just for the record, because I want to put her name on the record because she's such a fantastic person—I hope she's listening on Hansard right now. Shirley Frank is—continues to work as—I call her admin secretary in the office. She was there previously and she continues to be there, just invaluable person. And we also have Una Kim; that's U-n-a K-i-m. She's classified as an AY3. This is civil service staff, okay; this is not OIC appointments. And I have Robert Pontanares. That's P-o-n-t-a-n-a-r-e-s as an AY3. They're working—Una and Robert work in the front office handling administration. Shirley Frank works as administrative secretary for me, and then other two appointments. That's it.

Mr. Marcelino: Thank you for the answer. The SA, is it really true that he makes \$90,000?

Mr. Pedersen: No.

Mr. Marcelino: So it is under \$90,000.

Mr. Pedersen: Yes. Just—okay—if you could just—

Mr. Chairperson: Okay—

Mr. Pedersen: Give me time—

Mr. Chairperson: One second, okay. We'll—thank you. We'll let you have a minute.

The honourable minister—okay, the honourable minister.

Mr. Pedersen: Sorry. We'll get this figured out. I'm a rookie here, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: So am I.

Mr. Pedersen: For Howard May, his salary is \$78,811, and that's an order-in-council, so that's public information.

Mr. Marcelino: And how about William Poenstra [*phonetic*]?

Mr. Pedersen: William Poelstra, starting salary is \$56,002.

Mr. Marcelino: And between the two of them who are technical staff, are they members of the Progressive Conservative Party?

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Chairman, I'm—don't really know, and I—I'm a little offended by that question, because that's, you know—so, what's your next question, what religion are they? Like, since when do we ask people what political affiliation they have, what religion they are, you know, I would just urge the member to be pretty cautious about this, because that's personal information. I would suggest

it borders on illegal. I don't mind him asking the question, but I really honestly don't know, and I would be hard-pressed if I did know to actually tell you that, because that's personal information. And—you know, just—[*interjection*]

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me, Minister. There's a point of order being recognized here.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): As mentioned the other day, and I've subsequently confirmed in [*inaudible*] that the administration of government is what Estimates is to be about, what the member has asked is beyond the government and violates someone's individual freedom of assembly at privacy.

We would never ask someone if they were a union member. Why would he ask this question? It's—just has nothing do with government. That's my point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: I want to thank the member from Assiniboia for making that point of order, but the minister has said that he wasn't going to answer that question, so he's not required to answer that question. So we'll continue with the questioning when it comes to more pertaining to the subject of infrastructure. Okay?

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister. You can continue what you were saying, sorry.

Mr. Pedersen: No, I'm done. I'm done.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the minister about the status on the plans for the cloverleaf interchanges that the previous government had announced along the south Perimeter Highway.

Mr. Pedersen: Just—can I just ask for another minute, please?

Mr. Chairperson: One more minute. Okay, we'll give you a second.

Mr. Pedersen: I'm not sure if this was part of the \$600-million fantasy election promises that the member's talking about.

I continue to be briefed on—from the department on various projects. I haven't had a briefing on—I don't even know if there—if this was—if this is in the department's plans right now, or whether this was another one of these eleventh-hour election promises that—fantasy promises. Kind of like the fantasy

financial forecast that came in just before the election.

So, you know, if the member knows all about this, perhaps he can enlighten me and I can save myself a briefing another day. You know, we've got time to do that now, if he likes.

Mr. Maloway: Well, the minister should get out a little bit, because this was, you know, a big story several months ago about these interchanges being constructed. And very positive response from the public on this whole issue.

But, I mean, the minister wants to talk about fantasies and fantasy projects. I mean, we've got Highway 59—the Highway 59 interchange, which certainly wasn't getting done under their government previously. You know, they didn't do it. *[interjection]*

Well, you know, the member can talk about delays, the reality is that Brandon hospital is a perfect example of a hospital the Filmon government announced, like, probably seven times, and I don't think it was the Conservatives who even got the job done. I think it was the Gary Doer government—the NDP—that actually got the job done.

This project, Highway 59, was talked about for many, many, many years, and I'm sure under the Conservative government as well of Gary Filmon, and the reality is the member knows that he can't shut this one down. You know, if Sterling was—if Lyon was around, he would have just shut it down.

But the reality is that we made sure that this project is already well on its way, and the member mentioned last night that this project is now on time—on time and on budget, so. But that's to the credit of the previous government, not to the credit of this new government. I'm sure they're sad that it's progressed as well and as far. On time, on budget, under the NDP. That's what he said; that's what this minister said last night when we started this committee. Now I'd like to ask the member about The Red River Floodway Act, which is under his purview.

You know, the river levels are somewhat high now, and we have had for a number of years many days, over the summer, which hurts our tourism industry, where the river levels are higher than normal and they cover up The Forks walk and slow down tourism activities at The Forks and along the river. And since he has responsibility for this act, I just wonder whether he has any plans—short-term,

mid-term, or long-term—as to how he is going to deal with this issue and perhaps, you know, raise the river walk or do something about, you know, lowering the water levels by use of the floodway or, you know, I guess that's the only means possible here. Whether he is—that is—that project or that idea is on his radar at this time.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Chairman, when the member talks about the Highway 59 interchange, I'm pretty sure that if we had a cubic yard of dirt for every time that thing was announced and every sign that went up about it and every press release, the thing would have been built 10 years ago, but you'd—*[interjection]*

You know, like it just never ceases to amaze me when the member talks about this, that they've had 17 years to do this and, you know, when I was briefed about that Highway 59 overpass, and it's supposed to be completed by the fall of 2018, and I was thinking, I can see the former premier and the member from Elmwood running around with their gold-plated scissors, trying to look for a ribbon to cut, because for 17 years they tried to do it and, gosh darn, they just might not be able to cut a ribbon on this one; but you know, don't run with scissors. It's—apparently it's dangerous to run with scissors.

So you know, just—the member from Elmwood really needs to get with the times. This is not—you know, he loves to talk about the days when he was in here with Sterling Lyon and talks about the '90s, and Manitobans don't want to talk about that. They—what Manitobans want to talk is they want to talk about Highway 395, why it's in such terrible shape; because the NDP neglected it for 17 years. They want to talk about—in fact, he can come out to my constituency, come stand in my constituency office and feel the building shake, because that road has not been built yet, and it's—the CAA calls it the worst road in Manitoba so you know, it—17 years you've had to do this stuff and yet, you continue to not—you failed on the maintenance side; you failed on the preservation side; you run around talking about stuff that happened 30 years ago that, like, we've got a whole generation that was born since the time that this member is talking about, and yet he thinks that this is what Manitobans are interested in.

Manitobans want some good roads, want some good bridge, and they want to be able to know that it's safe to travel and not have to put up with the terrible roads.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m.,
committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., the House
is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m.
tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

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