

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
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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 29, 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

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs

First Report

Mr. Dennis Smook (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on June 28, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Bill (No. 3) – The Mental Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale*
- *Bill (No. 5) – The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act/Loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la francophonie manitobaine*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Ms. KLASSEN*

- *Mr. LAGASSÉ*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Mr. MICKLEFIELD*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. REYES*
- *Mr. SELINGER*
- *Mr. SMOOK*
- *Hon. Ms. SQUIRES*
- *Mr. WIEBE*

Your Committee elected Mr. SMOOK as the Chairperson

Your Committee elected Mr. LAGASSÉ as the Vice-Chairperson

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on Bill (No. 3) – The Mental Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale:

Chris Goertzen, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Michelle Gawronsky, MGEU–Manitoba Government and General Employees Union

Sandi Mowat, Manitoba Nurses Union

Your Committee heard the following fourteen presentations on Bill (No. 5) – The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act/Loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la francophonie manitobaine:

Edmond Labossière, Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM)

Justin Johnson, Conseil jeunesse provincial (CJP)

Paulette Carrière-Dupont, Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba

Jacqueline Blay, Société franco-manitobaine (SFM)

Annie Bédard, Santé en français

Michèle Lécuyer-Hutton, Pluri-elles

Mathieu Allard, Association des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (AMBM)

Ibrahima Diallo, Private Citizen

Madeleine Arbez, Francofonds Inc.

Rénald Rémillard, Private Citizen

Alphonse Lawson, Private Citizen

Bernard Lesage, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine

Gisèle Saurette-Roch, Réseau action femmes (MB) Inc.

André Doumbè, African Communities of Manitoba Inc. (ACOMI)

Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 3) – The Mental Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale**:*

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Bills Considered and Reported

- ***Bill (No. 3) – The Mental Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale***

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- ***Bill (No. 5) – The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act/Loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la francophonie manitobaine***

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Smook: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Annual Progress Report of The Path to Reconciliation Act, dated June 2016.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the actuarial report on the Civil Service Superannuation Fund as of December 31st, 2015.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Volunteerism in Manitoba

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to speak about the importance of volunteerism in both our great province of Manitoba and in my constituency of St. Norbert.

It is no secret that our province's volunteers are valuable, valuable in the sense that the effort of volunteerism brings multiple benefits to organizations, communities and people. Organizations, associations, groups and boards receive enormous contributions of time, talent and skill. Communities become more vibrant and cohesive through active citizen engagement. Communities receive important services from individuals who bring to the table a vast wealth of knowledge, whether it be from their employment or educational background, to history of volunteering in the past.

I want to recognize and appreciate the voluntary contribution of one such individual from my constituency of St. Norbert, Madam Speaker. I first met this individual in my past as a business owner and as president of the Manitoba Filipino Business Council. He himself was part of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce as vice-president policy of communication. He is currently the president and CEO of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

Aside from his excellent contribution to the wider business community within the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba, St. Norbert's own Chuck Davidson has recently retired from a long-serving executive role as president of the South Winnipeg Community Centre in Waverley Heights.

In his role as the president and as a volunteer, Chuck held volunteer roles such as being the chief pancake flipper at Breakfast with Santa and barbecue chef at the summer carnival. He was also involved in the South Winnipeg Winter Classic Hockey Tournament, the biggest outdoor tournament in Winnipeg, which Chuck organized for a number of years, and has grown since the development of the only outdoor girls tournament in the city of Winnipeg.

Second, Chuck was also involved in the planning and the amalgamation of South Winnipeg Community Centre, which now proudly serves both Waverley Heights and Fort Richmond, known as the Richmond Kings Community Centre.

I want to recognize and appreciate the volunteerism exemplified by Chuck Davidson and what he has done for the constituency of St. Norbert, specifically in Waverley Heights.

Madam Speaker, please join me in congratulating Chuck Davidson on his recent retirement as the long-time president of the South Winnipeg Community Centre in Waverley Heights.

Merci beaucoup. Thank you.

Teacher Appreciation

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Few people have as much impact on a child's life as their teachers. As the school year draws to a close, I want to recognize Manitoba's teachers and thank them for their work.

Teaching is not for the faint of heart. These dedicated professionals encourage their students' curiosity, help them overcome challenges and are there for them for everything from Homework Club, to coaching sports, to directing the school play, to making sure every child is engaged, can feel safe and can excel at school.

I am lucky to know many incredible teachers in the West End and beyond. There are nine schools in Minto, and every single one has teachers who go the extra mile every day to help their kids be the best people they can be.

This June's been very special for my family. Yesterday my oldest daughter graduated with her full International Baccalaureate diploma with classmates from all over the Winnipeg School Division. She looks forward to moving on to post-secondary education in Manitoba. My children received every opportunity to learn, excel and even have fun in public school.

I want all parents to know that their children's school has enthusiastic, creative and compassionate teachers who will make a difference in their children's lives long after they graduate. That's why it's so important to keep providing school divisions with the resources they need to hire teachers, keep class sizes small and enhance learning.

Every child has the right to an excellent education. My colleagues and I truly appreciate the efforts Manitoba teachers make to support our students and prepare them for the brightest future possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

William Kurelek Dedication

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): It gives me great pride to stand and recognize an internationally known and admired Canadian artist who grew up on a farm in the RM of Rockwood.

On August 23rd, 2015, a dedication ceremony for the unveiling of the William Kurelek monument took place at the junction of 67 and Highway 7. Two Tyndall stone slabs portray a reproduction of Kurelek's Manitoba Party painting and biographical plaque, and another plaque that features a collage of William's prairie-themed paintings.

The monument, four years in the making, was a vision of the Rockwood Citizens Kurelek Tribute Committee, made up of Doug Pickell, Merle and Barry Tomyk, Jean Burchuk, Cathy and Steve Kurelek, Margaret-Brenda Margetts, Michelle Schewe, Janet Meads, Marie Cosens and Roman Yereniuk.

Kurelek's eldest daughter Cathy and younger sister Nancy spoke on how the farm was hard for their father and how much this dedication would have meant to him.

During the last years of his life, his art began to reap rewards and thereafter. William Kurelek passed away on November 3rd, 1977 at the age of 50.

Sitting among more than 200 guests, the person who gave Kurelek his first break in the early 1960s, Avrom Isaacs and admirer Alfred Barr.

Following the formal afternoon speeches, a dinner was held in honour of this momentous occasion. After dinner, two documentaries about Kurelek were played.

* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to pay tribute to the artist who grew up near Stonewall. This hometown artist's moment-monument will mark a new era for the property with this location.

We have with us today Chairman Doug Pickell, Merle and Barry Tomyk, Dr. Roman Yereniuk of the Centre of Ukrainian Canadian Studies, Nadia Fisher and Autumn Good. Please join me in welcoming them to the Chamber here today.

Mikayla Grabowski

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, we've all seen videos online or the occasional television newscast where a sports team

has gone out of its way to allow a disadvantaged athlete an opportunity to shine. For the last four years, this has occurred regularly in the Park West School Division. Mikayla Grabowski is a proud athlete with Down syndrome, but if you watch her participate in a sporting event, you can plainly see that it has not slowed her down one step.

Middle-years sports can be competitive. As students learn the sport and perfect their skills, parents boast of their child's accomplishments and there's pride everywhere. Well, the parents of Mikayla–Adam and Marina–have been fortunate to see all of this set aside for one little girl's shot at glory. Whether it was basketball, volleyball, soccer or track and field, the coaches and athletes in Park West have consistently let the rules slide to give this grade 8 student from Hamiota her chance to shine. Whether it was allowing her to serve from the attack line in volleyball or to maybe travel a little in basketball, no parent, coach or player shouted in anger or questioned the fairness of this. In fact, Madam Speaker, fellow students would share in her success by cheering her on and giving her the thumbs up. Even when the games were close and the outcome was not guaranteed, Mikayla still had her chance to compete thanks to the sportsmanship shown by parents, coaches, officials and players.

In the words of her father, Adam: You all have built up a confidence in this girl that is going to help as she continues through school and life. As a very proud father, I wanted to make sure that while no YouTube video was ever downloaded or no newscast story was ever shown, I am very thankful to all of Mikayla's teammates, coaches and to the other teams who, for a brief moment in time, played the game like the results didn't matter.

Madam Speaker, I ask all honourable members of the House to join me in paying tribute to all the good sports in the Park West School Division, as well as saluting an exceptional athlete, Mikayla, who is joined in the gallery today by her father Adam and her brother Vincent.

OCN Growing their Economy

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, all Manitobans, no matter where they live, should be able to provide their families with healthy, nutritious meals.

One of the biggest challenges facing remote First Nations is to access affordable, nutritious foods. Fresh foods like vegetables, fruits, meat and eggs are

often very expensive in northern communities due to factors such as a lack of road access, transportation costs and the perishability of fresh foods. Tackling these challenges requires fresh new approaches to food production and supply management. Often-times, the best solutions are creative and community led and, sometimes, the ideas come from somewhere you would never expect.

A few months ago, a group of South Korean businessmen visiting The Pas to bid on hydro projects got their vehicle stuck in the mud and were pulled out by some local community members. The episode sparked a partnership to help increase access to fresh produce.

Opaskwayak Cree Nation started a pilot project called the LED Plant Factory, a modern-day greenhouse that uses computer-monitored LED lights to create a moisture- and carbon-dioxide-controlled space to grow different plants all year round. These costs–this closed growing system costs a fraction of the price of a greenhouse and has already demonstrated its worth to the community. Opaskwayak Cree Nation started growing vegetables at the end of last year and have already harvested some young lettuce, kale and broccoli. The project has been so successful so far, the community is hoping to turn it into a commercial venture. With food prices set to rise another 20 per cent this year–next year, isolated communities need creative ways to access good vegetables and fruits while generating their economy.

The project has incorporated students from the Oscar Lathlin Collegiate to help plant seeds, build a display for an upcoming international business conference and participate in workshops to learn how to harvest and store vegetables. The vegetables are distributed to care homes, high schools and low-income residents. Alongside community gardening initiatives like Meechim Farm in Garden Hill First Nation, which brings together traditional food harvesting and small-scale agriculture to offer healthy–

Madam Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would just like to indicate that we have another page that will be leaving us, and that is Sarah Cormier. Sarah recently graduated from Collège Régional Gabrielle-Roy with an average of 90. She's fluent in English, French and intermediate Spanish. She has

participated in volleyball for the past year and has coached grade 7 and 8 students in volleyball. Sarah has been active in many volunteer projects in her hometown of Ste. Agathe, and Sarah's taking a year break from school to help her pay for her tuition. She has displayed outstanding skills as one of our pages. Sarah wishes to enter law and, possibly, the political field.

So on behalf of all MLAs in the House, we would just like to wish her well and all the best with her future endeavours.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Investment in Manitoba Government Approach

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, in these last few weeks, we are learning that this government is not presenting the kind of change Manitobans expected. Instead, it is a hidden agenda where no one can get straight answers.

For the Conservative Cabinet, it's Christmas Eve with nearly 40 per cent increase in their salaries while so many are left out by their plans, including women, LGBTTQ*, newcomers, seniors and working Manitobans. And we're learning every day that their cuts to infrastructure are having dire consequences for all Manitobans. Yet, to them, anyone who dares out the obvious to this government, like the NDP, the Winnipeg Sun or the heavy construction industry, are just fear mongering.

Will this government reverse course and invest for the future of all Manitobans?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I am very pleased to report to the House that I just got back in the building from a meeting with the Heavy Construction Association, board of directors meeting.

We had a very positive meeting and a lot of information sharing back and forth, and we will continue to build on this relationship as we move forward. And we'll continue that good working relationship, unlike the previous government who didn't know how to build any kind of relationships with the industry.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, Manitobans have told us they are concerned about a hidden agenda

from this government, and we're just starting to get a peek.

Their plan for the North: slow down investments. Plans for the environment: open the door to more pollution. Plans for minimum wage earners: freeze the earnings of those who make the least while giving themselves a fat raise. Plans for seniors: promise them they won't raise taxes, then immediately claw back the benefits in their first budget.

Madam Speaker, this is not the kind of change Manitobans expected.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) change course for all Manitobans?

Mr. Pedersen: The only course that's changing is to open up and talk with Manitobans, unlike the previous government, who went around and—demanding things from industry that they had no business doing.

We're building relationships with all industries, with all Manitobans. We continue to listen to Manitobans and their concerns, and we will build Manitoba towards the most improved province in the years to come.

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

Child-Care Spaces Funding Plan

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Manitobans are rightly concerned about the hidden approach of this government. Just days before the election, the minister promised a plan that would meet the rising demands of our growing province for child care.

*(13:50)

For over a decade, our NDP government increased licensed daycare spots by nearly 1,000 spaces each and every year. Yet their budget includes no increase in funding to meet the challenge. In Estimates, the Families Minister refers to their plan, which, as far as most observers can tell, is to make no new investments.

Will the Premier finally come clean and explain how their plan is really no plan at all?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Deputy Premier): I want to thank the member for the question. It's an important one.

We are, of course—we campaigned on open government. We have an open government initiative; it's part of our mandate letters, mandate letters that I will remind members opposite, they never had mandate letters that they released to the public before. They were the most—they talk about—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —a hidden agenda for 17 years, Madam Speaker. It's unfortunate, and our government, where they didn't get it right, we will.

Child-Care Spaces Access Targets

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Winnipeg Free Press is reporting the Manitoba population growth is hitting modern-day records. This government needs to make substantial investments in child care, like our NDP government did, just to keep up with the growing demand.

So far, the only solution the Minister of Families has offered up is to fund home-based child care, which would chip away at the wait-lists at four to six children per home. This ignores the recommendations of the Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission.

With no clear access target, will the minister concede that his plan will not keep up with population growth, will not 'adequately' eliminate the wait-lists and it actually goes against the recommendations of the commission?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. It has been a question I've heard before, and I've given the answer.

We've got a fantastic plan for child care here in the province of Manitoba. What we want to focus in on—*[interjection]* Madam Speaker, we want to focus in on having more home-based child care. We think that there's too much NDP red tape when establishing child care, which we—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —need to improve upon. We think there's too much NDP red tape when establishing child-care facilities. We need to work on a whole bunch of things, including ECEs. We've talked about the importance of working with—having bursaries

and everything else to associate things with early learning and child care. And that's why we're excited about our plan for child care.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Minister of Families has refused to provide any comprehensive detail on their child-care strategy or their plan, leaving this House—this side of the House to wonder if there really is a plan at all.

Our commitment to creating 12,000 more spaces would've allowed for 25 per cent of Manitoba families to access child-care space. When I asked the minister what his target's at, he had no answer.

How many spaces does this Conservative government believe Manitobans need, and what is their access target?

Mr. Fielding: I had a bit of time—I was out of town at some federal minister meetings over the last few days—but I had some time to do some research, and the research that I found, Madam Speaker, is the fact that we're increasing child care by 6.1 per—\$6.4 million or a 4.1 per cent increase.

Some other research that I found out is in three of the last four years, in terms of operating grants, that money, that increase in child care, was higher than the NDP.

Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Last year, the NDP government increased capital funding support to 40 per cent of capital costs for non-profit, community-based child-care centres, as recommended by the commission. This capital funding would build on our record of creating 14,000 licensed spaces, building 100 new facilities and creating 70 training spaces for ECEs.

In Estimates, the minister told me that he's a numbers guy. But child care is more than just numbers. This is about real families who depend on this government to have real child-care strategy.

Can the minister share with Manitobans his plan or strategy on child care, and, again, what is his access target?

Mr. Fielding: I very much appreciate the question. You know, it's interesting, and if you look at the

NDP record we know that, if their plan was so good, why did you leave over 12,000 kids in terms of a waiting list that's there?

Another issue is in terms of the money that was provided. Obviously it wasn't budgeted for; it was announced in January but wasn't budgeted for in the 2016 budget, and I'll say a number of other things in terms of what the NDP can do and should do. We are absolutely committed to enhancing the child-care spaces that are there.

And I'll tell you one thing that's important for us as government, not just in child care but as is: The NDP likes to make these huge announcements, great announcements prior to elections, and, as mentioned, your operating budget increased only higher than ours in election years—

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

Highway and Road Spending Provincial Sales Tax Increase

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Three questions, and not one question answered.

Madam Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) continues to try and deflect attention from the fact that one of his first acts of his government was to cut the highway capital budget by \$48 million and freeze further tendering while he reviews the capital program.

When the construction industry pleaded with this Premier to move ahead on tendering the bizarrely—he bizarrely dismissed them with the comment bah, humbug, arrogantly accusing them of fear mongering.

Will he now reverse course and apologize for this insulting comment towards the people who build our infrastructure and economy here in Manitoba?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I thank the member for that question because, again, I'll raise the meeting that we just—I just came from with the Manitoba heavy construction industry.

And the one thing that the—of many things that the heavy construction industry was suggesting is not to have this deficit in infrastructure spending between elections only to ramp it up on the year of the election because that does not allow them to have steady growth within their business.

And now that they're—you come through a year like last year—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: —it affects their capital, their industry, their equipment and manpower that is now unable to handle that from last year.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Nothing substantial whatsoever from that answer.

The numbers speak for themselves. The Conservatives spent only \$174 million on highways in 1999. We quadrupled that to more than \$750 million in our last year. When we raised 1 per cent—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —PST we committed to a matching increase in the investments in core infrastructure, including a historic increase of \$240 million on highways alone.

Given all of the Premier's rhetoric and the minister's rhetoric, how can he justify continuing to collect 1 per cent PST while he cuts the funding for highways it was intended for?

* (14:00)

Mr. Pedersen: What the interim Leader of the Official Opposition conveniently forgot to tell us, this House, was about the 27 per cent average funding shortfall that they did not spend year over year within the Infrastructure, but every other department went over budget.

The Infrastructure budget was underspent by an average of 27 per cent, except for in the years of an election. And the heavy construction is asking to level that out, be constant every year, and we have promised to give them \$1-billion Infrastructure spending each and every year.

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

Ms. Marcelino: This minister is clueless on infrastructure.

Madam Speaker: I would just encourage members to reflect on each other as honourable members in this House.

I don't think it serves any purpose to be disrespectful by making comments as the member just did. And I would just urge caution on all sides that this Chamber should be more respectful of each other, that the decorum level needs to be improved and that we had all made that commitment, I think, on day one. And I think we all need to work a little bit harder as we're getting towards the end of a session, that we can carry that through. And I would urge caution with language and remember that all honourable members in this House are to be considered honourable members.

So the honourable interim Official Opposition Leader, to.

Ms. Marcelino: I apologize, but I'll amend the word. This minister knows very little about infrastructure.

He talks about underspending on infrastructure in years in which we had major floods which required a focus on flood mitigation. The fact is, the NDP invested more on highways every year we were in office than the PCs, and we exceeded our commitment to invest the additional 1 per cent on the dollar on core infrastructure by more than \$80 million.

Why didn't this minister admit to Manitobans his hidden agenda was to continue to pocket the 1 per cent PST while cutting the core highway infrastructure it was intended for?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, I want to just reflect back to the meeting I just had with the heavy construction. That was based on respect. That meeting was based on respect. It was about me going to the heavy construction board of directors, sitting down with them, having a dialogue with them. It wasn't about hurling abuse back and forth.

That's how this government will operate. We will treat all Manitobans with respect. We will have a dialogue with all Manitobans and we will not go down in the ditch as members opposite have.

Northern Manitoba Communities Investment in Infrastructure Projects

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, with the Health Minister arguing that the North lacks economies of scale needed for funding and the Infrastructure Minister cutting the northern highway

budget by 60 per cent, northern and indigenous families are worried.

During the election, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said he would complete the Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba outlets in this term. Yet, in Estimates, the Infrastructure Minister wouldn't provide details about when construction will begin and be completed.

Why have this Premier and this minister backtracked on this very important project?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): Again, comes to the point of respect. We're done having coffee parties, as the previous government did, and not doing anything on this.

But before you can start building a ditch, you have to talk to the local people. You have to get engineering done. And until that happens, there is—it's difficult to put a start date on it because, unlike the previous government, we believe in having everything in place first, not doing a half job like the previous government did.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, we invested \$1 billion in flood mitigation and built the Lake St. Martin emergency outlet. This Premier and minister made promises on the outlets they had no intention of delivering on. Despite having two contracts tendered for construction, the minister said he couldn't give a specific date. This minister refuses to answer questions.

Why are they continuing to pocket the 1 per cent on the dollar from the PST but stalling on flood mitigation?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, I—it's difficult to understand the rationale of the previous government, so I—we won't bother doing that today. But I can just tell the House that plans are continuing on this; engineering is continuing on the flood outlets.

And this is a large project that requires both input from the heavy construction industry, who are very happy to see me there for a change from the previous government, and we will continue to work with all parties involved, including the local First Nations who have a very integral part in this.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Manitobans want answers and action on the promises that this government made.

With the clawing back of northern infrastructure dollars, a Health Minister who dismisses the northern economy and an Education Minister who cuts funding for northern midwifery students, northern and indigenous families are seeing they are just not a priority for this government.

Why won't this minister admit that this government's hidden agenda was to, again, cut funding on programs and stalling needed infrastructure projects for the North?

Mr. Pedersen: I would remind the member that that was—when she talked about promises—that would be 17 years of empty promises, no results. And Manitobans, on April 19th, turned to the Progressive Conservative Party to actually get results in Manitoba.

And we will deliver on the promises that we have made, unlike the previous government.

Midwifery Program Dissolution of Program

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Midwifery students are feeling disrespected by the Minister of Education.

To recap for the House, the minister assured students only a couple of weeks ago, and I quote, that there would be a program for them in the fall. In a meeting with students yesterday, he shifted blame to the College of Midwives, refusing to accreditate the program. I table an email sent from the College of Midwives to the students yesterday that says: The CMM has approved the midwifery education program offered by UCN program since its 'inception.'

The minister has been shifting blame for his decision onto the universities and colleges. Will the minister admit he stood up in this House and told members and students their program had a future, knowing all along—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I appreciate the question to provide a little clarity on this particular issue. *[interjection]* It's still redacted, yes—a little clarity on this issue, because it—*[interjection]* We have tried to work with the students, and we've certainly let the universities

and the college take the lead on that role. That does not seem to have worked out.

The college did approve a program for this year as long as both University of Manitoba and University College of the North were involved. That is no longer the case. So there is currently no approved program for this year. We worked with the University of Manitoba to try and develop an alternative, which the students did not seem to appreciate.

But we will continue to work on behalf of the students.

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

* (14:10)

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I just want to point out to the House that the Minister of Education just tried to shift blame onto the students now by not appreciating that they're being forced into nursing when that's not what they want to do. They want to be midwives, and this minister pulled the funding and ended the program. Not only that, he tried to muzzle them.

Will the minister apologize to this House and to the students for promising a program this fall and trying to muzzle them from talking to the media?

Mr. Wishart: I appreciate the question. We have certainly tried to work with the students to try and develop an alternative for them. And, as I mentioned in the previous answer, an alternative was offered.

I appreciate the fact that the students maybe didn't appreciate that alternative. It is not exactly what they thought they signed up for, but it was what was offered at this point in time. We will continue to work with the students. We recognize that there is a need for midwives in the province of Manitoba, particularly in rural and remote areas, but there is a demand in all parts of the province, so we will continue to work to try and fill that demand in Manitoba.

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

Ms. Fontaine: I again want to point out that this minister just disrespected the students yet again. Just yesterday, when confronted with the fact that students have been told their program is cancelled, the minister suggested that this line of question—

questioning may actually hurt students' chances in the future.

I ask the minister: What else should Manitobans take away from those comments other than a threat? Will he apologize to the students for yesterday's comments and today's comments?

Mr. Wishart: I'd like to point out that this previous government was the one that got this program into trouble, starting 10 years ago with a program that was not well organized. So, in 10 years, they had nine graduates. Really good results, really wonderful results. I'm sure the member would like to talk to her colleagues about how that turned out—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: —including four students who chose—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: —to sue because the service had not been provided, and won.

So I think that we're looking at a case here where the previous government has left a program in such disarray, and in 10 weeks, they're expecting us to put back together what they messed up in 10 years.

Provincial Nominee Program Status Update on Case Files

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, on Monday, I provided a specific case file in advance to the Minister of Education and Training. I am inquiring into an individual's provincial nominee case that amplifies what is wrong with our Provincial Nominee Program.

The applicant for this case file has inquired on several occasions for his status update. As of last week, the application of over two years is still pending with no further explanation.

Would the minister provide to the House today an informative status update of the case file. And if he feels that it is confidential even though no case number or name has been publicly mentioned, will he commit to having the status brought to my attention before the House adjourns this week?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I appreciate the question.

And, as the member knows, we can't talk about individual cases, and I respect that she did not reference too many details in the letter that she sent on behalf of her constituent. And I would assume, of course, that it's her constituent.

But that—in terms of where the status is at, I had provided an update earlier showing that we have, and I'm going by memory here, about 5,200 remaining, which we expect to have 4,000 completed by the end of September. And so, we're certainly making progress in regards to that. We have a lot of interest and a lot of applications and we're doing our best to deal with them.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have another PNP case where the applicant, after waiting an obscene amount of time over the phone, was told that their application of another two years was still pending. After checking the online portal, they had the same response: pending.

At the—as a last resort, this applicant emailed the MPNP on January 13th, 2016 regarding the case status and received the following email response. I quote: It will be processed in the order it was received, so it may take several days before an official response is sent to you.

It is now June 29th, and I believe that 169 days would constitute as more than just several days.

How exactly is this government fixing this broken system?

Mr. Wishart: And I appreciate the member's reference and her persistence on this issue because we certainly want to deal with applications as quickly as we can.

The member did reference the fact that the system was in disarray, and that's certainly how we found it, and we're trying very hard to improve the speed of the system. From the reference, in terms of updates, I think the member will realize that we have improved the rate of processing and we hope to get things back in order very quickly.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am a strong advocate for immigration here in Manitoba, and when Manitobans approach me and reach out to me

regarding the case files, I would like to be able to give them and provide them a response of sorts.

This government has acknowledged that the wait times for the Provincial Nominee Program are unacceptable. I appreciate the urgency of getting 4,000 done by September. With the application inquiries I have received since being elected, people are having to put their lives on hold and wait more time, more than two, even three years in some cases, for a status update beyond the word pending.

Will the minister commit to providing a quarterly update to all case files from the day that they are submitted?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wishart: I know that the member is a very strong 'advocate' for immigration. I like to think that all MLAs in this province should be very strong advocates for immigration. We are a government that believes in the value of immigration in the province of Manitoba and we're working very hard to do that.

I will certainly look at whether there's feasibility in doing quarterly updates. I certainly appreciate the fact that there would be a lot of paperwork involved in that, but we will see whether that is something that can be feasible and whether something can be posted online. The reality of it is, of course, that we have to be very respectful of information.

Francophone Community Status Update on Bill 5

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madame la Présidente, la communauté franco-manitobaine est une partie tellement importante de notre culture, notre économie et notre patrimoine comme province.

Je suis fière de me compter comme membre de cette communauté.

Translation

Madam Speaker, the Franco-Manitoban community is such an important part of our culture, our economy and our heritage as a province.

I am proud to count myself a member of that community.

English

Which is why I am proud that our government introduced Bill 5, The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act.

Can the Minister for Francophone Affairs please update us on the status of this important bill?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs): Madame la Présidente, j'aimerais remercier la députée pour cette question et son appui de ce projet de loi important.

Je suis ravie d'informer la députée que le projet de loi 5, la Loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la francophonie manitobaine, a été passé hier soir au comité, que le vote final a été pris, et les membres de la communauté franco-manitobaine ont applaudi pour cette étape importante dans la relation entre le gouvernement et les francophones ici au Manitoba.

On hâte de voir ce projet de loi passer à cette Chambre en troisième lecture et de continuer à travailler avec cette communauté—

Translation

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that question and her support for this important bill.

I am pleased to inform the member that Bill 5, The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act, was passed in committee yesterday evening, that the final vote was taken, and the members of the Franco-Manitoban community applauded this important step in the relationship between the government and the Francophones here in Manitoba.

We are eager to see this bill passed on third reading in this Chamber and to continue working with that community—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hospital Visitation High Parking Fees

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, Candace was only 14 years old when she was diagnosed with cancer and after a brave fight, passed away at the age of 16.

During those two years, she fought bravely and she always kept a brave face. She spent a lot of time in hospital undergoing chemo and she always had the support, of course, of her family and friends around her.

We know that many of those visitors to the hospital had to pay high parking fees when visiting the hospital, and, of course, many were ticketed when they hadn't calculated the correct amount of time that they'd be staying.

What ideas has the Minister of Health been working on to help families like Candace to ensure high parking fees don't get in the way of visiting loved ones?

* (14:20)

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I appreciate the member's question and the many, many heart-breaking stories we hear about families that are struggling each and every day with cancer, and certainly I think all members all members of this House, we join with them as well as we can to say that they're not alone in that journey. We know that there are many Manitobans who do that as well.

We also know that there are many different fees within the health-care system that can be a barrier to individuals getting health care. We're concerned about those, whether those are ambulance fees, whether those are parking fees or fees that people have to pay at a pharmacist when they're getting a procedure done. Those are all things that were left by the previous government, all things that concern us and all things that we want to make steps to improve, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, you know, we're not interested in wasting time pointing fingers here; we're simply looking for those good ideas that are out there, ideas like from Candace's grandfather, Dennis, who has become an advocate for what he calls a Candace card, a transferable card that could allow families, the immediate families of patients, to simply come visit their families and loved ones and have that unlimited parking when they're there.

Having this kind of support for patients is important, and it would come—when—so it doesn't come to a financial hardship for families. Dennis has joined us here in the House today. I'm humbled to table his petition that was circulated at Candace's funeral for this House today.

Will the Minister of Health honour Candace's memory and this petition and look at creating this Candace card parking pass?

Mr. Goertzen: And, as I said, Madam Speaker, in my initial answer, and certainly we know that there are many different fees within the health-care system that can be a barrier. For individuals who need to get an ambulance, that they often have to pay a

bill of \$500. For those who go to a pharmacist, they're sometimes faced with a bill of \$20 or \$30 to get a procedure. Also, parking, we know, is a specific issue.

I know that the member indicates that time is an issue, and I appreciate that. Time is an issue in many of the different things that we face in the health-care system and in this government. But he also knows that this has been a problem for a very long time; it was a problem during his entire time in government, and it wasn't a priority then, but it is certainly something that we're continuing to look at different issues, and I am certainly willing to hear different suggestions, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, it is a priority, and it's a priority to me, and it's a priority to this opposition and certainly a priority to Dennis and to his family.

You know, it's not just Dennis, of course, though, that are—that is concerned with this issue. I also table a petition of many, many other Manitobans who took the time to sign a petition asking for fairness when it comes to parking at hospitals. They feel helpless when loved ones are in a hospital, and even though they know they can't make them feel any better—or can't make them better but can make them feel better, they can be there to support them.

This—the Province should be here to support those families, and one way the Minister of Health can do this is by lowering the cost of parking at all hospitals in the province.

Will he commit to taking the time to sit down, speak with Dennis about his particularly good idea—

Madam Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and certainly, as I said in the previous two answers, absolutely, we're always interested in ideas. We know that we were left with many different fees within the health-care system which are a barrier to Manitobans. We've taken some action already in starting to reduce some of those fees. I'd be happy to meet with any Manitoban who has an idea to try to better the health-care system, Madam Speaker, and we can certainly make those arrangements.

While I have the floor, I want to welcome my son Malachi here, in the gallery, who graduated from grade 4 just yesterday and also my wife Kim, who

we'll be celebrating our 19th anniversary very shortly, Madam Speaker.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase Government Intention

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): If this session has proved anything, that this is a government without vision, without direction and without any policies.

Oh, sure, they're happy to go out and take credit for our digital media tax credit, for sure. They'll issue press releases talking about the lowest unemployment rate in the country, which this government created. They're even happy to keep dining out on the PST, Madam Speaker.

If the Finance Minister actually opposes the PST, why didn't he have the courage of his convictions to do something about it when he had the chance?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, I thank the member for that question about vision, and I thank him for recognizing that our party has had the vision to recognize that at this exact juncture in history, not only do Canadians have an opportunity to make the CPP bigger, we have an ability now to make it better. And that is the discussion that we in Manitoba are leading across Canada, with our counterparts in this jurisdiction, with ordinary Manitobans.

This is all about vision, and we welcome that group to get on board and recognize that we have an opportunity here to make CPP serve Canadians better, and the opportunity is now. Will they get on board?

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

Mr. Allum: Maybe it's just me, but this Finance Minister is always late. I was asking him about the PST. We asked about the CPP yesterday and the day before and the day before that, and he didn't have an answer.

But the question for the Finance Minister and all members of the government is that they come off with some moral outrage about the PST, and yet they're going to dine off it for four more years.

So I ask him again: Why doesn't he have the courage of his convictions? Do something about it or be quiet about it once and for all.

Mr. Friesen: The member demonstrates an awful lot of anger when it comes to the PST, and he's right to do that. It pales in comparison to the anger and outrage of all Manitobans who endured an increase to the PST under that NDP party when they told them they would not do so. And so that is why it is a fundamental commitment of this government to our people in this province that we will reduce the PST. We will do it in our first term.

What they broke, we will fix, and we will get it done.

Madam Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Bell's Purchase of MTS

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

The background of the petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to do all that is possible to prevent the Bell takeover of MTS and present 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.

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, I'd like to table a list, the opposition list of government ministers to be called for concurrence on Thursday, June 30th, 2016. It's a big list.

* * *

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

* (14:30)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

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

The committee will now resume consideration for the motion concurring in all the Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2017.

On June 28th, 2016, the Official Opposition House Leader tabled the following list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for sequential questioning in the debate on the motion today: Families; Education and Training; Growth, Enterprise and Trade; Infrastructure; Agriculture; Health, Seniors and Active Living; Crown Services; Justice; Sports, Culture and Heritage; 'indigenous' and 'municipal'—Municipal Relations.

And the floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): My questions are for the Minister of Families.

Can the minister be so kind as to share with me the—what criteria will the minister be using to measure efficiencies in the department—the department's corporate audit?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member—okay, just one second.

An Honourable Member: Just raise my hand when I'm ready?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, when to answer a question, yes.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Well, thank you for the question.

And as a government, as I, you know, would believe that most taxpayers want us to do, we are always monitoring and evaluating how a performance is a review; programming—that's a part of it. A part of any auditing plan, there is reviews that go on track.

We, as a government, truly think that we need to ensure that we have value—taxpayer-valued money and, as a government overall, we've talked about the importance of performance reviews which we think is important, critical to the needs of—not just of the department, but as taxpayers.

So we're fully committed to ongoing reviews of agencies and departments. I think taxpayers would want us to take that sort of approach and, once again, our commitment throughout the election campaign, and since then, is to have performance reviews of how programs are evaluated.

What we will do is we will all want to move forward and potentially enhance programs where we're seeing extreme good value in, and at the other side of the equation I think it's important to also evaluate if we're not getting good value out of programming, you're not getting good results, we think it's important to review those, as well. And decisions would have to be made.

What we also think is critical important is in terms of performance benchmark. That's something that—initially when I came into the department I think that more work needs to be done, not just in this department, but I think overall in terms of how we perform as a government. It should be an outcomes-based process where you're reviewing how you're doing, how the results are happening, how you're performing as a government, what the benchmarks are for improvement.

So those are all things that I would encourage our department to be auditing, although I'm not an auditor; I won't be involved in the day-to-day functions, of the course, like I'm sure you could assume and appreciate that. Those are the overriding guiding principles that I would instruct our department to review beyond initial phases of an auditing process that goes forward.

Ms. Fontaine: I get that the department is doing a performance review. We all get that because, on this side of the House, we hear that every opportunity that members opposite want to espouse it.

I mean, we don't really have much information on it, so again I'm going to try my question again, and it is: What criteria and metrics will the minister be using to measure efficiencies in the Department of Families' corporate audit? So specifically.

Mr. Fielding: Well, I guess the quite answer is on a program-by-program basis. You're going to evaluate; there's going to be different measurements for different programs. You can't use a cookie-cutter approach to all different programs as you evaluate them. You want to see what your—where your benchmarks are, where you're performing, how you're performing. Sometimes you're not at the level where you should be, so your benchmarks, your performance levels are not where they should be, so you want to improve them.

So, I guess, if you're talking a program-by-program basis, we think looking at something on a case-by-case basis makes a lot of sense. And that's how you build in performance benchmarking and measurements.

What we would look to do, or my guidance to our department—once again, I'm not an auditor and I'm not involved in necessarily the day-to-day functions of that, but we would encourage them to look for ways you can obviously save money, be more efficient. But what's even more important is in terms of how you deliver the service, if you can deliver a service in a more effective way where you're going to provide some good results, maybe more people involved in a program, maybe the end result of a program is important.

I think for, agencies and organizations, there should be a standardized approach, obviously. You were talking about service purchasing agreements, but as you evaluate programs on a program-by-program basis I can't say that it's a cookie-cutter approach. I think that would be unwise to move in that direction because I think you need to evaluate them. And, to be quite honest with you, a part of, you know, global process of a performance review that our government has talked about the importance of reviewing that, that, of course, would be guided by those core principles of the overall review and looking into the department.

Ms. Fontaine: So really at this point what the minister is saying, that the audit—because I mean, again, you're not providing me with any specifics, so really it's just—on the one hand it's a standardized approach, and on the other it's a case-by-case. So it's kind of really willy-nilly right now.

So let's move on to the second question because I can tell the minister doesn't understand the question.

The government tender issued clearly states there will be a project co-ordinator designed within each department to work on the audit.

Can the minister advise how will this co-ordinator be chosen, and what will their responsibilities be? And who do they report to? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Mr. Fielding: —in the performance review piece, so I can't prejudge how that process will work.

Ms. Fontaine: So, just to be clear: at this point, the Department of Families hasn't started anything in respect of the performance review.

Mr. Fielding: It's been well documented in the media that there's, overall, guiding principle of a performance review; that's a part of it.

We would anticipate that all levels of government would want to engage, and even as taxpayers, whether you work in administration where you're a service provider, that everyone would want to make sure that we're as efficient as we can in government.

* (14:40)

What we are extremely proud of in the Department of Families is the fact, from the previous government, we actually enhanced the budget by upwards of \$175 million. And we're extremely pleased that, when you do look at some of the numbers—and I'll review some of them with you, here. We—part of that \$175-million increase, it's made up of a number of different figures which was quite a bit of a substantial increase from years past—over the last 17 years, in fact.

I'll give you some numbers just to cut to the chase here. But, overall, as I mentioned, it represents about \$175-million increase in the budget. So, of all the government departments that are out there right now, 'samily' services had about a 10 per cent

increase in terms of their overall budget, and that's year over year, which we think is substantial. We also—when you look at the individual departments, since you brought it up, community living and disability services saw about a 49.696, or a 14.4 per cent increase in their budget.

And that—a lot of times what happens in previous years is there's mid-year transfers. Or, essentially, overexpenditures that happen within government, what this government was prudent in, and we want to make sure that we're budgeting proper for these types of issues.

We also were able to—and we're very proud of the fact that for employment and income assurance, we fought from this side of the House for a number of years to have that baseline increased to 70 per cent—75 per cent, sorry, of the mean market rent for the Rent Assist program. And a part of that—we actually saw about a \$50-million increase year over year for the employment and income assurance program.

So we're excited about that; we think that there's a lot of benefit. And that's an example of where you can spend more money if it makes sense to spend more money. This government is absolutely committed to investing in areas where we think there's value for money and, of course, when you're able to provide affordable rent allowance for people in the tune of a \$50-million increase, we think it's good value for money.

Also, community engagement corporate services, we saw a substantial increase. And also, in terms of Child and Family Services, we saw about—just over a \$20-million increase, which represents about 4.5 per cent increase over there. And it's—it is a substantial increase, but the reason why we thought it was important was because the amount of kids in care, which we think is important to provide services.

I recently, in fact, over the last two days, had a chance to meet with a colleague of mine from the minister for social services out of Saskatchewan. And I asked some questions in terms of the child family services just to understand. I mean, the—our populations are fairly similar. We have, I think, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1.3, one point—almost 1.4 million people. They have about 1.1.

I see my time is reduced, so I will say part of that. They had 4,000 kids in care; we've got over 12—or, 11,000 kids in care. So we made substantial

investments in this budget, and we're not going to shy away from increases like this when it makes sense for taxpayers and makes sense for providing better services for Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: Would the minister advise exactly where that \$20-million increase is going?

Mr. Fielding: Absolutely. It's my pleasure to say that we increased the budget for Child and Family Services.

And just to pick up on the point that I left off because I know my time ran out last time: As mentioned, from—in Manitoba, we're seeing over 11,000 kids in care. When you compare that—and I was surprised to hear the numbers in Saskatchewan where they have over 4,000 kids in care. Same—generally the same population, the same demographics, the same—you know, Manitoba, Saskatchewan are very similar beyond the fact that Winnipeg is dominated by a major urban centre, Winnipeg, of course, and Saskatchewan has more smaller towns, maybe like the size of a Dauphin or other parts like that.

Beyond those—there's very similarities. So my concern when we got into the office after 17 years, where you're seeing 11,000 kids in care—And in fact, since 2008—this is a really interesting stat which I happened across in some of the briefings that I've been involved in—is the fact that the number of kids in care in Manitoba has spiked. In fact, it's gone up by over 55 per cent since 2008 alone.

So suffice it to say, we need to roll up our sleeves. We need to work with everyone. We need to make sure this isn't a partisan issue. We need to work with members opposition; we need to work, you know, from everyone. We had a chance to brief yourself and the New Democrats; I believe the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) was here at briefing on some of the initiatives we're talking about with the protecting children act, as well as we had an opportunity to brief Doctor—I actually won't say Dr. Gerrard; I'll say the member from River Heights—on terms of our initiatives in terms of the protecting children act, which we think is a major focus.

But to get to the bare—your question, what the \$20 million is made up of is about \$13.3-million increase the base adjustment. So basically, you hadn't budgeted properly in the last budget. There was more money that was allocated throughout the year for this. You also saw a number of other different

funding items. We saw, in fact, a \$1.452-million increase in the annualized cost associated with expansion of existing COACH program. We know that programs like this are extremely important to the welfare of our children.

We also saw about a \$553,000 increase, or nine full-time equivalents, for a program called StreetReach, which we talked a little bit about in Estimates. And we think it's extremely important. There was some discussions in the Estimates process about a 24-hour program. It's an important issue that I think—I think it was the member from St. Johns had raised, which I think is an important issue which I've asked our department staff to review to see if it makes sense. It seems to make some sense to me. But we'll be working towards seeing how that would be unrolled.

Also, a part of that 20.733 or 4.5 per cent increase in the Child and Family Services budget is in the neighbourhoods of \$321,000 increase for the grant funding for the assistance to the youth RaY program. What that truly represents is, in terms of some important staff improvements, 3.5 positions which we think will help in terms of the service projections. Similar to, as I mentioned, the StreetReach, where you have enhanced amount of staff that will be there. And the question always comes up, what does the staff mean? Well, it means more people can get these services.

I see my time is running out, but those are just some of the examples of how the Family Services budget has been a very priority for our government, and that's why we've enhanced it by upwards of \$20 million.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm just going to respectfully ask if it's possible that the minister would consider putting his cell on vibrate because his phone keeps ringing in—

Mr. Chairperson: We did—we already got—looked after that. Thanks for giving us attention.

Ms. Fontaine: The minister refers to the protecting children act, and we did have some preliminary discussions with my colleague.

I want to ask the minister why, in respect of all of the Hughes recommendations, that he decided to start with the communications process, which I understand and I think that we can agree is a piece of that. But as, you know, I've shared with many people that, you know, in working with children and families, if you were to ask anyone, you know,

children want to be with their families. They want to be with their communities or in their communities with their families. So I'm—I'd like to know why the minister started with the communications process, because it wasn't the No. 1 recommendation coming out of the Hughes inquiry, as he knows. So the reasoning for that, please.

* (14:50)

Mr. Fielding: We think that the protecting children act is crucial. We think—we agree with what Justice Hughes has said. In fact, this issue goes back to 1991. If you read the information in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, there was information that was provided way back in 1991 that talks about the critical need to share

So this isn't a topic that is new; this is a topic that has been around for a very long time. It's also one of the major recommendations of Chief Justice Hughes that talked about the critical nature of sharing information. And we think that this is a practice that has been done.

I know the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) is here. In our briefing sessions, we talked about—and I'll take—it's, you know, during my past life as a city councillor and chair of the police board in my last role, I take pride in one of the initiatives we worked on, and it certainly wasn't me; it was—and I think it, quite honestly, was driven from the Province—was a program called the Block by Block program. And the essence of the Block by Block program, which is in the William Whyte area—I believe the actual individual program is called Thunderwing, if I'm not mistaken. What it did is it said that there's a lot of people in need. There's a lot of information that's out there. There's a lot of service agencies that are catered and that are focused in on children; they're focused on a whole bunch of people.

And the problem that we've seen is that there's barriers; there's, kind of, these agencies—the social service agencies, the governments, the law enforcement agencies—where they're acting in silos where they all have information and, if everyone is able to come together and plan which is in the best interest of the child, we think is good. So it—so the legislation is not just based off the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry that talked about it. It's not just based off what Chief Justice Hughes had talked about and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. It's not just talked about in other numbers of literature that has—that the Children's Advocate has talked about the critical nature of

sharing the information. It's based off of other models; in Alberta, for instance, where they have it.

It's supported by a whole number of child advocates, one being Sheldon Kennedy. We were honoured to have Sheldon Kennedy come just over the last number of days. I know the Minister of Education was there at the announcement, and there was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 50 service providers that were also there at the announcement. And what Sheldon Kennedy clearly said is that—you know, I don't want to—I'm not going to put his exact words on—in the table, but he talked about the critical nature of being able to share the information.

So we truly think that it's the first step. It's not the only thing that needs to be done, but it was the major recommendation of Justice Hughes. And we think that the ability to share information will allow agencies, and the planning of those for children, is a step in the right direction. And it allows people to share. It'll allow for reaction, to react better in terms of the planning of the child to work more effectively. It also allows for better early intervention or prevention, which I think everyone can agree we need to focus more on. There's more—there's too much reaction, too much taking kids into protective custody, and not as much early intervention and prevention.

So we truly think that it's the first step, but not the only step.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I'd like to ask the minister about some of the housing-related issues that are in his portfolio.

I believe that the figure that was shared earlier in Estimates is \$48 million in increased capital funding. So I'd just like if the minister could share with this committee which projects will that \$48 million be going towards supporting.

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

And housing is extremely important. I was very pleased over the last two days, there was some federal, provincial and territorial, I might add, meetings that talked about housing issues. The federal government—I know there's—I guess there isn't any Liberal members here in the Chamber—but we had an opportunity, this is the second time, actually, that I've had an—I've had a second opportunity to—*[interjection]*—the member from River Heights or the member from Burrows? Anyways, you know, or ones—members of the opposition, in terms of nature.

So my point is we had a opportunity to meet with the federal minister in terms of housing. We think it's critically important. The issues that we're facing in terms of our housing, if you look—you see in other jurisdictions very similar—very similar to issues that people are seeing all across the country.

We know that there's aging housing stock. A lot of our housing has been built in the '80s, and so they're up for some renewals and refreshing, and I think some of that work has been done over the last three, four years. So we're happy to see that. We also know that the expiry of operating agreements that will be coming up fairly soon is a major issue. It's an issue that will impact non-profits and anyone that's involved in it.

So these are major issues that we had a chance to discuss with the federal minister. There, of course, has been some substantial federal money that has been invested in their 2016 budget. Manitoba, of course, will be a part of that, and we ensured at the meetings that we obviously want to ensure that we have a good portion of that money dedicated to increasing not just affordability but also social housings, but also other programs, home ownership; there's a whole bunch of other things that we think are extremely important.

We know that housing is something that is critical to the needs of citizens. It's also a part of the poverty. We think it's truly is one of the answers, not the only answer, for poverty. That's why this government was so pleased to enhance the Rent Assist program. The Rent Assist program, of course, I think it cost about \$22 million for implementation of it and, on a yearly basis, you look at what the mean market rent is for this, and we're able to add, I believe it was—the number's around \$7 million additionally to this—to the Rent Assist program, which allows people to live. It's affordable housing benefit that allows people to live in a whole bunch of places.

So we are committed to that, as the member mentioned—I'll skip to your point now—that there was about a \$45-million increase, which represents about a 56 per cent increase in the budget, which we're extremely proud of. We—obviously, there's some comments made on the 500 and 500. There's a intake process that has been going on, the number of projects that are ongoing. We haven't made any final decisions on which projects those will entail.

I know the member raised the gas station—I'm going to say the name wrong, but gas station

warehouse theater housing program. We had a chance to meet with them fairly recently in the last two weeks. So we want to do some due diligence and make sure they're smart investments. We'll be doing that, and we're extremely happy that we're able to put this amount of dollars, plus the new monies the federal government will be putting in to housing, we think will make a difference.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we continue, I would like to remind members that we do not—it's not acceptable to—in the debate to refer or allowed—allude to the absence of or presence of members in the House. Okay, so, just a reminder.

Mr. Kinew: Thank you to the minister for his previous answer.

Is there a target within the department for how this additional \$45 million will be directed to different projects? Like, we heard the 500-500 commitment, so does that mean that it'll be a 50-50 split between social and affordable units? Or, I guess the more direct way to ask through you, Mr. Chair, is: Is there a specific ratio in terms of how that \$45 million is going to be directed to different forms of housing?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I—you know, I probably won't—I'll hesitate from going line by line, but what I can say is, some of the money goes to debt servicing, and that's to do with some of the refreshes that have been taking place over the last number of years. And that's—you know, all credit to the previous government in terms of some of the 'refress'.

At one point, there was close to \$1 billion in upgrades that needed to be undertaken. I think that's been chewed—I say chewed—that has been reduced with some of the investments that have been made. There is more money, obviously, for a whole bunch of different programs that's there. We do—you know, and with our meetings with the federal government, we do anticipate that there will be multi-millions of dollars invested in housing that comes to Manitoba, and we're going to be at the table fight, you know, ensuring that Manitoba gets its fair share of the housing dollars.

* (15:00)

So I can't specifically say on which projects we'll be dedicating them to. You know, we are a new government and we have been slowly but surely looking at projects and meeting with them. So we will review them.

But I can't say that there is additional programming dollars that are there. I know in my mandate letter, there was a program that I think is extremely important. It's home ownership with Aboriginal, indigenous people. There's a program with the Manitoba real estate board, and I believe the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs was involved in this as well, where they're able to do things like subsidize a bit of the loans and the down payment that were there. We think—and I can tell you our Premier's (Mr. Pallister) point of view. He spent over 10 years fighting for Aboriginal land rights, I believe it is, for females, you know, in course of his federal career. And so we think part of the answer, above and beyond the social housing, above and beyond the affordable housing, is in terms of ownership. And I think that that program that we used as an example is one that if you look at different groups and you're able to partner with the right people—it's got to be the right deals, of course—can help people.

So that's why we're committed to this. We're extremely happy with the amount of dollars that we've invested in these areas. And, as mentioned, as those discussions with the federal minister goes on, we anticipate more spending in these particular areas. So also some great incentive programs that have been pretty effective. There's one that—retail tax credit program. Reading the other day, I believe that it created—the premise of the program is the private sector is able to build housing—that was initiated under your previous government, and 10 per cent of the house—the homes needed to be affordable in nature. And, just looking at the financials, I saw that—I guess it was an investment of \$1.13 million that created almost 70 new affordable home spaces.

So I think, if you look across the country, you can use a multitude of different models to do that, whether it's kind of a direct management where we're actually building it, whether it's a sponsorship management where someone's kind of managing for it, or you have these programs where you're engaging non-profits, the private sector, to build affordable homes. We think it's a mix of everything. There could be some financing tools. The federal government has talked about some of the financial tools that may be available to us, and we're excited about those discussions.

Mr. Kinew: Is there enough money in the budget here to complete the commitment at 500 social and 500 affordable units by 2017?

Mr. Fielding: Well, again, it really depends. We invested a lot of money in this budget, you know, over \$45 million, a 56 per cent increase over last year alone. So we think—and what's interesting about budgets is it's—there's no room for—what I'll say is there's no hiding in the weeds with budgets. Either you're investing the money—you get to know what government's priorities are pretty darn quick when you look at a budget because that's where the money hits the trail, I guess, if you will. And that's why we're so pleased that we're able to make substantial investments. I think that a 45—I don't think anyone would disagree that a \$45-million investment or a 56 per cent increase over last year is a small amount of money.

We also think that with investments from the federal government—you know, there's an overall budget. If Manitoba is able to get an appropriate amount of money—and we'll be fighting for every cent; I can tell you that—we're going to look at a bunch of financial tools. There's obviously things that you're paying cash for; there's things that you're paying through the loan act. And that's a convoluted—there's a whole bunch of ways that you can finance these things.

So the long answer—long and short answer to the question, I guess, is we made substantial investments. We want to work with the federal government. And we're going to have to see how those discussions go. We anticipate that some decisions will be made by year-end on it. We're going to try to invest these things. We're going to make some investments in the projects that we make sense, financial sense. We're going to review it; we're going to do our due diligence. We're not going to just make decisions just based on someone coming to the door with, you know, money coming out. We've—we got to make sure that money is well spent. I think taxpayers deserve that. They'd want us to review these projects. If there's some projects that are needed in a timely way to make some decisions, we'll obviously be prioritizing those ones first.

But I think what we've learned from potentially in the past is, if you make budget commitments and commitments without understanding the amount of money that's going to cost to drive them, you end up in a kind of a structural deficit. And that's what we saw when the bond raters downgraded our credit rating. So we want to be prudent about these things. We want to see what money's on the table from the federal government. We want to put our skin in the game, which we think \$45-million, 56 per cent

increase is what I would call some skin in the game in terms of investments in housing, plus substantial dollars from the federal government, plus looking at financial tools of how we can do that best, and there's a whole bunch of sources the way to do that. And we're going to come up with some common sense solutions to it.

Mr. Kinew: How many—within this plan that the minister has laid out, how many net new units of social housing does he aim to add in the next year?

Mr. Fielding: Well, you know, just going back to the—just, probably because I was there just in the last few days and had discussions with colleagues across the country and with the federal minister—and our discussions were very good with the federal minister. He seems to be somewhat open to dialogue and consultation. I know, probably led by Quebec in terms of our feelings, but we truly think that a housing policy—and there is substantial dollars on the table the federal government—really needs to be flexible.

We need—we think that the provinces are, obviously, have the responsibility of providing the housing services. So we need agreements with the federal government with all the money that will be coming in, in terms of not dictating where we're going to spend the money, but allowing us some flexibility in terms of how we're going to do it.

We also got to make—and this ties into your question of how many more affordable housing can be done with the federal money that's there, there isn't long-term commitments. There needs to be predictable long-term commitments. If you have programs in terms of substantial increases in money—not just in this, but in child care and other things—if you've got a year or two agreement you might make some different decisions. You might—you know, I'm veering off into child care a little bit, but you might make decisions of a just one-time funding to invest in capital, as opposed to long-term operating agreements. So, with that, we need to ensure that we understand, from the federal government, is it predictable, is it long-term, is it one-time money, making sure that there's that consultation piece.

And that's what's going to guide how we formulate and how we implement the housing strategy, based off consultations. That will be happening over the next number of months before any final dollars and agreements are signed. I can commit to that. And I think my colleagues across the country in housing addressed that. In fact, we put a

communiqué out that talked about a shared vision for housing solutions. But that has got to be guided from what our citizens want in terms of a consultation, in terms of what makes sense for the region.

And so I don't know if that answers your question. Probably doesn't. But I'm saying that there is a number of decisions that are being made that will guide some of the funding decisions in the future. And I can't give you the answer right now because I just don't know how much money the federal government will be contributing, and is it long-term, is it predictable, or is it just one-time money?

Mr. Kinew: I'd respect, you know, what the minister said about setting targets right now, but perhaps he could provide greater detail on the potential federal money that is on the table.

You know, the first question that comes to mind is how much are we talking about. And, then, if he could, perhaps, provide greater detail in, like, what are the potential terms of these dollars? Is it—this 50-50 matching funds so that the, you know, portion of the \$45 million from the province that goes forward with leverage an equal amount? Or is it leveraged at a higher rate than that?

If he could provide some insight as to what the potential federal contribution towards housing could be, that would be much appreciated.

Mr. Fielding: I don't have all my—I don't have the numbers right in front of me in terms of the federal commitment.

I can, for sure—probably by the end of the day—get you what the federal commitment was in the budget. I can tell you that it will be substantial money. It will be not in the millions, it will be in the tens of millions of dollars that will be—that will probably be Manitoba's portion.

You know, part of that—I don't want to interfere or interject before, you know, the final decisions are being made because, as I'm sure you can appreciate, if we somehow negotiate it somehow in the media then it's going to—it really will impact those decisions that are being made. But I can tell you it's a substantial investment in social and affordable.

*(15:10)

And, to your question of is it matching dollars, some are matching dollars and some aren't, depending on which programs. And I believe the federal government has identified that through their budget or through their communiqué. So I'll leave

that, because that probably is in the record. I don't have it right in front of me, but I will be able to get a copy of the federal budget to provide the exact dollars and cents from the federal level. But we don't have—there hasn't been an identified amount, and those negotiations are, of course, ongoing, and will be finalized, hopefully, by, I'm sure—by year end, we'll have the final figures.

Mr. Kinew: And thanks for the answer, to the minister.

On a, I guess, not unrelated matter pertaining to the relationship with the federal government, he, the minister, made reference to the operating agreements that will be expiring soon.

I respect that there's still a conversation to be had there with respect to what the federal government is going to do. On the provincial side, is there funding in place to hold up, you know, whatever provincial contributions might need to be made to keep those agreements viable?

Mr. Fielding: Well, you're right. I mean, the operating agreements are something that across the country are people are facing, and I think there's different time frames of when those operation agreements become more of an issue in Manitoba. I'll have to say the bulk of those are kind of in the later years. I don't have the exact dates right in front of me, but I believe it's somewhere around 2018 and '19. We did raise this and it wasn't just a Manitoba exclusive thing. This is something that impacts groups across the country and it is on the radar screen of the federal government on whether they're able to make some substantial commitments to that.

There was an agreement, but, you know, I'll have to say that there was an openness to discussing the issue and there was openness, at least in the initial meetings of a shared, I guess, goal plus some commitments to have what I'll call flexibility in the agreements, so you know, the Province for the most part would be able to spend the money where they think makes some sense based off some guiding principles.

So, to answer your question, there is, I believe, and I don't have my staff here, but I believe that there is some short-term loan options that are in place from our department that help in the immediate term, but the vast majority of our operating agreements, or a lot of them, happen in a few years from now. You know, I don't have the exact date, whether it's 18 or 20, but there is some financial tools, I guess, our

department has that help—can help mitigate that—I can tell you that the department is very much focused on working with these groups to provide them with planning and assistance as these operating agreements become—well, essentially when they end. So that's what our department is involved in, so there is some financial tools, I guess, and we want to make sure that, you know, these aren't surprises to groups as the operating agreements come to fruition, or end.

Mr. Kinew: You know, I've spoken to constituents, seniors homes, residents of seniors homes, and non-profit and co-op housing, and it's an important issue to them, so, you know, I'd say that I appreciate the minister's comments and I'd encourage him to, you know, work with his departmental staff to make sure that those bridge-financing situations are there and that he, you know, advocate strongly to the federal counterpart to make sure that the feds come to the table there.

With respect to housing renovation of existing stock, is the usual \$100 million in restoration money for the Housing portfolio and redevelopment—is that still in the budget for this year?

Mr. Fielding: I don't have the—I don't immediately have the answer for the exact dollars and cents, but what I can tell you that there is money in the budget for renovations in terms of the refresh, I guess, if you will.

There's also a variety of sources you can do this from, right? There's the cash component—that's a part of it; on a normal basis there's also something called loan—the loan act, which essentially, you're able to do some of these long-term works, and that's part of what I had mentioned earlier on is the debt servicing. So, in the past what's happened, I believe there's been a multitude of different funding sources to have these refreshed. Some are done in cash; some are done through the loan act. I think the vast majority is done through the loan act. And I can tell you that there is money within our budget, in terms of the overall budget, including the loan act, that goes towards refreshing.

That, of course, is also an item that, you know, is discussed, and potentially an option for the new federal money that could come into play. It's a two-year agreement. So I would say that this government, without, you know, committing as much, we definitely see that, the federal dollars as being an option, or using any financial tools we have at our disposal, including cash, including loan act to address some of the long-term what I'll call deferred

maintenance issues on some of the infrastructure, in terms of refreshes. That's a part of it.

So there'll probably be a variety of funding sources we can use to do it. But there is an emphasis to get more refreshment done on the existing housing stock, because the vast majority was built before the 1980s.

Mr. Kinew: I was going to ask about the \$34 million for maintenance and repairs, but I suspect it's probably a similar answer on—just in terms of whether that money is in the budget this year.

So maybe I'll just move along and say the following: social enterprises have stepped in to the space of helping to renovate Manitoba Housing units, so I just ask the minister whether there's a commitment to continue, you know, using social enterprises as contractors in the renovation and refurbishing maintenance of some of the Manitoba Housing units.

Mr. Fielding: I really like social enterprise. I think it makes a lot of sense in a whole bunch of ways. If you can have people—put people to work that are part of programs, I think that there's, absolutely, a space for that within the funding envelope. I know that there is money associated with this budget, and potentially future years. I know the member from Point Douglas, I believe, was one of the ones that championed it. I had the chance to—I was at Neechi Commons about two or three weeks ago which, of course, is part of a social enterprise element of things.

Whether you can do that in refreshes is something, I guess, the department can consider. I don't—I'm not aware of, right now, in terms of the elements of social enterprise that could be a part of it, but I definitely think that there is room for it.

Now, with that being said, we're not going—we're going to make sure that any deal that goes forward, you know, you got to do your due diligence. We're not going to just throw money or do things just for the sake of doing things. It does have to make some financial sense. We're going to do our due diligence on things, and I think taxpayers would want us to do these sorts of things beforehand.

So, for the most part, I think that there is a place for social enterprise, a part of the government's plans to go forward. And there is money that's allocated in the budget for this, absolutely.

Mr. Kinew: There are a few different social enterprises in this space related to housing. Some of them have to do with, I guess, temporary moves—when tenants have to be moved out of a place and there's some kind of cleaning and upkeep work that happens before they're allowed to move back in. Potentially, like, as, you know, some, you know, insect-control issues or things like that are happening. So social enterprises in the Point Douglas constituency step into that space. And then you have other social enterprises such as BUILD and Youth Build that, potentially, could bid on some of the construction projects there.

And during the campaign I had a chance to visit the Social Enterprise Centre, and they shared a piece of research with—I think it's published now—that found that there was a multiplier factor of four to dollars spent in social enterprise. Meaning, spending \$1 in social enterprise, or allowing them to receive \$1 in contracted services actually contributes \$4 net to the economy. And so there does seem to be a business case there, so I would encourage the minister to, you know, take advantage of every opportunity to provide set-asides or bidding opportunities for social enterprises with respect to the housing stock because, again, this is sort of a—related to a market approach but, again, it is an action that government can take to kind of stimulate some educational and some economic opportunities for some people in our province. And so it does seem to be a win-win-win situation.

* (15:20)

There are, I guess, other operating agreements that are set to expire.

So I'd like to ask, with respect to those rent-geared-to-income units that are owned and operated by Manitoba Housing: Is there funding to support those after the current agreements expire?

Mr. Fielding: Well, to your point about the social enterprise, the number that I saw was actually one to 2.33, if I have my numbers correct, but it could be one to four, but the notes I've seen—point is, there seems to be a business case, if it's the right deal that can help, and I think it can bring people—it's getting people to work. I mean, I think there's some interest in it. I think there has been also some work done on some procurement pieces that's part of it.

And the question was, I believe, related to operating agreements and is—I'll have to ask the question again, I'm sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, sure.

Mr. Kinew: For the rent-geared-to-income units that are owned and operated by Manitoba Housing, some of them have operating agreements that are set to expire.

So is there funding available to support those after the agreements expire?

Mr. Fielding: Well, you're right in a whole bunch of different areas. The operating agreements are subsidizing, whether they be in non-profits, whether it be—you're right, in our government-owned stock.

You know, I think we have provided, as mentioned, there's some financial tools and planning that's involved that we can work with non-profits. You know, obviously, Manitoba Housing, in terms of our general stock, can work through these agreements.

There is a whole bunch of financial tools that are in place. I can't tell you on an individual basis which ones have been used for which facilities, but I can say that we are very aware that the operating agreements is something that has a financial impact, not just in the short term, but will have a greater impact in the long term, and, potentially, that could be an item and, potentially, should be an item, if there are some federal dollars that comes into play, which there will be, because it's something that's going to hit the provincial government fairly hard in over the next two and three years. So, if there's ways we can mitigate, not just on our housing stock, but for non-profits and other groups, I think we're open to dealing with that. I think there's been some short-term financial tools that people can use in the planning piece. We think it's important.

So I'm not sure if that answers directly your question, but we know it is an issue. And when a lot of these agreements come up in 2018 or '20, we'll definitely have to make some challenging decisions and work with the groups and, at the very least, we want to work with all these groups and make sure they know what the issues are.

Mr. Kinew: Can the minister tell the committee whether the funding to tenant and agency services has changed in this budget—tenant and agency services, whether the funding to those resource centres has changed?

Mr. Fielding: I'll take the question on notice. I don't have the answer for him.

Mr. Chairperson: Under advisement, okay.

Mr. Kinew: All right, maybe I could return to the social enterprise issue again. I thank the minister for pointing out the one to 2.3 figure that he had heard.

So just going back to that issue, there was a commitment in the Manitoba Social Enterprise Strategy to double 2014-2015 spending levels on contracts with social enterprises by the 2017-2018 year.

Will Housing be able to meet those commitments?

Mr. Fielding: You know, we are, of course, a new government. It has been—we were talking about this earlier today, I guess it's been eight or nine weeks. We've been, to be quite frank with you, we, you know, we—I got elected, I got appointed the 3rd of May, the first two weeks we were, you know, quite frankly, wall-to-wall meetings in terms of briefing the departments. It's a huge department now. There's over 2,100 people that are associated with it. There's—it's over two—I think it's a \$2.1-billion department. My numbers may be a little bit off, but overall, you get my point, it's a big department.

Really, the focus, initially, was to get briefed and understand the issues, if there's any critical issues we'd need to deal with right off the bat, set some of our agenda, which we talked about in the campaign, our campaign promises, big thing, of course, was the protecting children act, which was my big issue. We're happy we were able to introduce that.

The other phases, of course, is ensuring we are able to answer questions in the House as they go forward and the Estimates process. I have had some discussions. I've been able to, as mentioned, visit kind of a social enterprise facility up close. I generally like the concept of it. I'm going to have to be honest with you, we're—we'll have to make decisions as we go forward in terms of the amount of money that's there. I believe the loan act does guarantee some money through the social enterprise. I do like what I see. For the most part, it seems to make some sense. But, again, you know, we'll have to evaluate the programs on a one-off basis, and we're going to do due diligence on them.

We're not—you know, I don't want to put money in because we know that there's a—and I'm not getting political, but there—you know, we were close to almost a billion-dollar deficit. So we want to make sure we're spending our money, and I guess we've whittled it down to eight hundred, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) will be able to give you the

exact numbers, but my point is we've—it's less than it was, but, to a certain extent, we do need to spend money efficiently.

With that being said, if you do have programs—I personally have no problems investing in programs where you're making a difference. And, initially, what I've seen with some of the social enterprises, you know, there seems to be some good value. You're getting some people back to work, but it's got to be the right model and it's got to be the right program. And so we haven't made determinations, as we go forward, of what the dollars and cents will be and which programs we're going to do and how that financial tools—how that will be funded. There could be a whole variety of ways we can fund it: through cash, through loan act, through a whole bunch of areas. And I can't preclude, in terms of how this discussions go, as we go forward, and that's why we think it's important. We did a performance, and we are—we will be engaged in a performance review piece to ensure we get value for money. But one thing is for sure: We have been able to invest over \$175 million more in Families' budget and \$45 million, or 56 per cent increase, in the Housing budget.

So the money is—you know, you've always got to follow the money; I think there's a famous line that says that. Well, the money says that we made substantial investments in Housing, in this budget, and substantial investments in vulnerable people in terms of programming and services. And we're, quite frankly, proud of that. We think it's a step in the right direction, and we're going to evaluate programs as we go forward.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, I've heard that follow-the-money line before. I'm not sure if it was John le Carré or maybe the rapper Lil Wayne, who said that, but point taken.

So I just—you know, just as a quick follow-up: Can the minister outline what the amount is, this year, that's currently earmarked the Manitoba Social Enterprise Strategy?

Mr. Fielding: I am going to take that one under advisement and get back to you.

Ms. Fontaine: I'd like to touch base in respect of we were beginning some preliminary discussions in respect of customary care legislation, so I'd like to kind of just continue with that line of questioning.

I think I had asked, in Estimates, whether or not there was any work do—being done on the customary

care legislation, and I think that we had to close it off. So I'm going to ask the minister if he would answer that question again.

Mr. Fielding: Just for clarification, the question was, are we going to—please repeat.

Ms. Fontaine: Is there any work being done, currently, within the department on customary care legislation?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I can tell you what our mandate—and we did, in the last election, I believe it was actually the biggest mandate in 101 years. And we received about 53 per cent of the vote, and what we tried to do, during the election campaign, is put together some—what we think, some practical, some realistic, some policy options that we want Manitobans to believe in. And a part of that—first piece and, as mandated by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), for me was the protecting children act, which we are extremely happy that we were able to introduce in our first 100 days. That was a big priority for us.

We don't see that as the only thing we want to do. We think that sharing information is critical, whether you're a law enforcement agency, whether you're a social service agency, service provider, education. You name it; we think that if you're able to break down some of the silos of how that information's shared, is really key.

*(15:30)

And we think that the amount of kids in care, whether it's 11,000—Saskatchewan has over 4,000, about two and a half times less—we think will make a difference. This is the first step. We think it'll be able to allow us to react better in terms of the planning of the child. We think that it'll also be able to provide early intervention and prevention earlier to it.

In terms of customary care, you know, I—in some of our discussions with a number of groups, it's something that always comes up. I think I said in the Estimates process that I think that there is a lot of merit in the customary-care model. I think if you are able to have parents and/or relatives help in the planning of the care for the child, I think it is important.

So, with that being said, our first priority is the protecting children act. Once again, I do think that there's merit in the customary care. You know, I'm going to take some time over summer, I'm going to go up North to places like Nelson House and other

areas where this, where they've actually—what they've actually seen there, I haven't seen it first-hand, but everyone that has talked to me about this talks about what a great job they've done in reducing the amount of kids in care. So I want to look at models like that and see what experiences they're doing.

With the customary care, it's something that obviously was brought, that died on the Order Paper. The issue, as I understand it, and I wasn't an elected member at this point, but the issue that I understand at that point was with some of the consultation. There wasn't full support from some of the indigenous community.

I believe Cora Morgan had sent a letter talking about some of the consultation, and I believe the grand chief did as well, but Cora for sure did. And they talked about the consultation piece.

So I think that's critical. I think the consultation piece is important. And that's why I'm going to be happy to go up North and see some of how different organizations, agencies, authorities are doing things. And if they're doing it well, then we're going to look at it.

I also want to look at the south and I also want to look for the child-welfare system and other things, whether it be how ANCR is running, whether how it's, how, you know, some of the child-welfare system here in the city is working.

So, long story short, we want to consult and we want to make sure it's done right before introducing it. And one thing's for sure, we won't wait 17 years to do it. We're going to consult and we're going to make sure it's done right.

Ms. Fontaine: What is being done to keep children in communities or close to their homes and to keep them with their families?

Mr. Fielding: Well, first of all, I think that it's critically important that we protect the most vulnerable children in our society. And that's why I was so pleased that we were able to increase the budget, in this budget, by about \$175 million. And a part of that wasn't just for the child-welfare system, it was for a whole bunch of things, the community living disability, you know, I won't go through the numbers again, but for the child welfare, I will.

We increased funding for upwards of \$20 million for programming, not just the reactionary piece, but the early intervention and

prevention policy initiatives. We talked about some. There's a whole bunch of them, not just necessarily related to child welfare, but there's a number of different programs we've gone through in terms of the enhancement to the budgets.

We think that's the starting point. We think that we need to listen to people. We need to listen to the indigenous community. We need to listen to a whole bunch of people of how we can do that better.

You know, when you talk to other people in other jurisdictions, like Saskatchewan, when you hear that they have 4,000 kids in care and we have 11,000 kids in care, we know that we can do a better job and we need to do a better job. And when you realize the fact that the amount of kids in care has increased by over 55 per cent since 2008 alone, we know that we very much need to focus in on this issue.

And you've got to do things differently. It's not just about, you know, the reactionary or the protection nature; you obviously want to make sure that's the focus for the government, but you also want to make sure that early intervention and prevention policies are there. You know, you also have to work with everyone. And I mentioned just—not just stakeholders in the indigenous community, but you also need to work with the federal government.

And the federal government has talked, and if you're familiar—I'm sure you are familiar with the recent human rights tribunal ruling that talked about the inequities between on-reserve and off-reserve, not just services—well, yes, essentially, that's it: services and funding that goes towards not just children, but, you know, services. There's some inequities. That's a part of it. And so we want to work with federal government on that issue. Decisions have not been formally made on it.

So I guess that's the big part of the answer is, we think making strategic investments in areas where you're seeing budgets go up because we think it's important to do it; looking at the early intervention as opposed to just the protection process to it; consulting with indigenous communities, we think, is extremely important; looking at models, best practices that work not just in Manitoba but in other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan and Alberta and, really, across the country; and also working with the federal government to see what—how they'll be addressing this issue, how they'll be coming to the table and, you know, what does that mean in terms of

funding. How does this human rights tribunal—how—what is the impact on that in terms of our budgets and how we invest money?

Ms. Fontaine: I mean, you know, respectfully, I hear from the minister all of these buzz words about, you know, listening to community and listen to indigenous communities, and enhancing the program—I think that we can all agree that those are—obviously, we've spoken about those and we understand that.

What I'm asking the minister, and not to keep reiterating over and over and over again the statistics and 17 years, like, I get it. You—every question the minister repeats the same thing. So what I was asking the minister is, you know, what is being done currently in the department to keep children in their communities and close to family?

And maybe what I'll do is I'll expand on that in respect of, again, that family—children want to be with their families. They, you know—so what is the minister's direction and vision for his department, for his—you know, I don't know how many of his 2,100 staff are actually working in CFS. But, you know, what is the mandate, what is the vision, what's the direction to keep children with their families specifically?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I—quite honestly, I—you know, respectfully, I do think the answer was pretty straightforward. And you're asking me the same question, so I'm—quite frankly, I'm giving you the same answer again because you're asking the same question.

So, you know, I guess what I could reiterate, because this is my—you asked my philosophy or my direction. And that is this government's direction. Number 1 is: we think the first stage of this is the protecting children act. And, if you can have organizations and agencies that are able to share information, they're able to break down the silos right now, because there are silos that happen. And I used to be chair of the police board; I can tell you the law enforcement agency, they have information, social services have information. You also have government agencies that have information.

You know, we think that if you're able to break down the silos—we agree with what Justice Hughes had talked about. You know, how the importance of sharing information is a part of it. We agree with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, then, in 1991 talked about the importance of sharing that information.

So we agree with people like Sheldon Kennedy, who came to town and supported our legislation. And we're happy that we had 50-some-odd stakeholder groups that came out to the announcement that talked about that. That's a part. People like, you know, Diane Redsky from Ma Mawi who, you know, who helped and spoke of the critical need for it.

So we think that is a priority. We think that is, you know, a strategy go-forward. We also think that consulting with—listening to people is key. Like, listening to indigenous communities, we think, is critical. It's critical to addressing some issues.

You know, I don't want to be a government where we're just stuck here in the Legislature. We're not listening to groups and agencies and that sorts; we're just making decisions in our own little bubble here of the beautiful, beautiful place, the dome here. But you don't get all the answers from here. And so a part of that, you know, a part of our plan is got to be to listen to people. And, quite frankly, we don't think that it was done as well as it could have been done in the past.

* (15:40)

And so we truly think that consulting, listening to people, plus the protecting children act is important elements of it. We think that working with people like the federal government, in terms of what their responsibilities will be in the future after this human rights tribunal that came down that talked about the needs and on-reserve versus off-reserve. We think that they got to be part of the solution. We can't just work in isolation and say we're going to solve all the problems.

We also need to focus in on—and this is one, once again, you know, I think a focus—you asked what my focus is. If we can turn more money for early intervention and prevention, we are getting to these kids before they're in a—not just the kids, but the families, before they're in a situation of crisis where you need to protect more of them. I think that makes a lot of sense. When you do have other jurisdictions like Saskatchewan—you know, you have 4,000 kids in care there and you've got 11,000 here. You got to look at other jurisdictions like that and see what they're doing.

So we think that is a strategy; we think that is a priority, and we're—we're pleased about our plan so far, but it is only seven weeks in.

Ms. Fontaine: In respect of the development of the protecting children act—and, you know, and I get what the minister is advising and I agree with listening to people and consulting with people. So, in the context of the construction of the protecting children act, can the minister please advise all of the stakeholders that he met with and consulted in, in the establishment of that particular act?

Mr. Fielding: Thank you for the question.

Well, of course this isn't a new issue. This is an issue that was talked about in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry back in 1991. In 1991, they talked about the need for the sharing of information. This is also something that Justice Hughes talked a lot about. The critical nature and why it's so important that agencies, organizations, government bodies as well as law enforcement share information. So we don't think it's something that has been a new issue that's been there. It's been an issue that people have been talking about. And we don't want to waste any time. We think it's important to engage us. We think that the quicker you can have agencies, organizations sharing information, the better off—the earlier you're going to be able to react. You're going to be able to provide early intervention and prevention.

We think that your government introduced a good part of that in terms of the Block by Block program, because that's essentially what this is, right? The Block by Block program—it worked with the police services; it worked with social service agencies down in the William Whyte area, down Selkirk. The operation was called Thunderwing—the operation, the program initiative was called Thunderwing.

And that's essentially what they're doing. They're allowed to share the information and they're allowing for the planning of the child, which we think is important. We think it's critical. So a part of this—we see this as a starting point. We want to engage in a whole bunch of people, and I won't go through my travel plans with you over the course of the summer, you know, again, of where I want to travel to, to listen to people, but we think it's critical. We've talked to indigenous communities. In fact, at our press conference, I know the Minister of Education was there and was one of the leads on it, and I'll give him a lot of that credit where he did a lot of that research where we had Sheldon Kennedy that came, a lot of the child protection agencies.

I wish I had the newspaper article from the Free Press because it laid it out perfectly, where it talked

about child-protection organizations that are supportive of the bill. So we are happy that over 50 organizations and agencies were a part of that, part of the announcement, came up to the announcement. But our consultation work has not begun. I just want to emphasize that, that we want to consult as much as we can. Obviously, the—it looks like the House will be rising tomorrow. This bill will not be passed, probably, tomorrow, I would assume. So we have a lot of time to consult and to make sure we're getting it right.

And what I clearly said, through the media and when we announced it in the press conference, that we see it as a starting point. And we all—we are also in your briefing from the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief), as well as—I think the member of Minto was there, and also with the member from River Heights briefed later on—that we're open to tweaking the legislation if there's ways we can make this legislation even better. We think that there's an ability through regulation, through the regulation elements of things, if people have concerns with the privacy elements of things and the consultation, we think it's a key part of it.

And we also spoke to the Children's Advocate. We had spoke to people in the Ombudsman's office. And, before we actually drafted the legislation or finalized the final copy of the legislation, we took their advice and we incorporated it. We also sent the legislation plus the draft, the renewed legislation, to the indigenous leadership. There's a indigenous leadership council that's mandated to meet with the minister on a day-to-day basis. You know, I know people like Diane Redsky was at the announcement.

And so we think it's a starting point. We want to consult more as we can go, and if there's an ability to make this bill even stronger, we're going to try and do it. And we're looking for support. We're looking for you, you know, members of the opposition. If there's ways we can make this better and have this unanimous vote—you know, we had some very good discussions with the member from River Heights on this—whether there's some amendments that are there or through legislation—or through regulation that we can make this even stronger, then we're open. We're open ears.

But, to be fair, we want to make sure that this is done in a timely way. We're not going to wait, you know, from 1991, when the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry talked about it, to get something done. We need to move quickly on it.

So that's part of our plan, and that's the process for the consultation that we see ongoing.

Ms. Fontaine: So let me just clarify a couple of things.

So, first off, my question was in respect of who did the minister or the department consult with in the construction of the act. And then, secondly, I never asked for your travel plans. I didn't ask for that. What I asked for is that before your government tabled a legislation in a myriad of different other recommendations that are found in the Hughes inquiry, my question was: Who did you consult with in respect of stakeholders?

And why I'm asking that is because, you know, every opportunity that you have, you talk about listening and you talk about consulting, but you're just—you just finished saying that you actually didn't consult with anybody before tabling that protecting children act. You just said that. You said it was a starting point and you said our consultation process has not begun.

All you've done in the last five minutes was repeat that there were 50 organizations that were present at the media advisory or the press conference. That's not the same as consultation in respect of the meat of an act. And so I'm going to ask again because, again, you know, I think it's ironic that every opportunity you have, every opportunity that the minister has, he will criticize the NDP and somehow in this kind of, like, illusionary world that we never consulted and we never listened and we never met with individuals.

I could share with this House how many meetings I've had in the last 20 years with a myriad of different stakeholders. So, I mean, to continuously criticize us that apparently we never met with anybody and we didn't consult, but you've just said in the last five minutes that you did not even consult with anybody in respect of the protecting children act.

You did mention that you showed it to the Child Advocate, which is fundamentally different than consulting. And I'm sure that the member—or the minister knows the difference between showing an already piece of legislation and consulting on the idea and this need for this piece of legislation.

So I'm going to ask again if there was any consultations with any stakeholders prior to the development or in the process of constructing this piece of legislation. And then when was the

legislation sent to the Children's Advocate and to the indigenous leadership prior to it becoming—getting executed and tabled here?

Miigwech.

Mr. Fielding: Well, you know, again, and, you know, to be quite frank, you know, we can talk about this again. You know, I think I was pretty fulsome in my answer for it.

You know, the reason—you asked me why, you know, I'm repeating this. Well, the answer is, you've asked me the same question twice. So, you know, maybe you don't like the answer but I will give you the answer again.

You know, quite clearly, we think that consultation is important. You know, we're not going to make mistakes that were made with the customary care, right, where you have people like Cora Morgan or the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs that talked about the consultation piece.

*(15:50)

So we think this is a starting point for the legislation. You know, we do want to consult. We want to listen better, which we don't think has been done in the past as much as it should've been.

You asked, you know, about the Children's Advocate and as well as the Ombudsman. I can tell you, as a fact, that we did send over draft legislation, and we did change the legislation, the draft legislation, to the final legislation, based a lot on some of their—some of the recommendations.

So, to be fair, we did do a lot of that consultation. There's the indigenous leadership group, which we're, obviously, mandated—as minister, I'm mandated to—which I believe was one of the recommendations that came out of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, where the indigenous leadership meets with the minister. And we, obviously, want 'commeck'—comment and feedback from the indigenous leadership. We, obviously, provided information to them. We sent over, after we made some changes to the original draft based on what the Ombudsman said and the Children's Advocate said, to the indigenous leadership. But I was fairly clear, throughout this whole process, that we see this as a starting point; we don't see this as the end. I don't think the legislation's going to pass by tomorrow. I could be wrong, but I don't think it will.

We want to listen to people. We want to consult. We want to go out, and we want to hear what people

have to say. We know that there was a lot of people. We know that child protection advocates, like Sheldon Kennedy, were there and support the legislation. We want to listen to people like that. We want to listen to all groups, and, a part of that—you know, I think if we're able to visit people, and I think sometimes, you know, visiting them and—in their home settings, going to where they live and seeing things in a practical sense as opposed to them coming to the, you know, the big minister's office and having meetings there, which I don't think is great practical sense, because I truly believe that you, as an elected 'ficial,' and I've been elected 'ficial' for pretty close to nine years now. So the way I govern, and I see things is—I'm going to listen to the information that we get provided from administration, but that's not the end-all, be-all. I need to listen to the stakeholder groups. I need to listen to people, and I think sometimes the information and the answers are halfway in the middle.

So we're not going to stop consulting in this. I'm not going to apologize for making this a starting point and offering olive branch to people to make some changes. If we need to tweak the legislation to make it even stronger, we're 'absolly' open to do that, and I think this summer and longer, if it takes longer, then we'll take that time to consult and get it right, because we want to get this right.

Ms. Fontaine: So I'm going to ask the minister to provide me a list of the stakeholders that he is claiming that he met with, besides the indigenous leadership and Children's Advocate, prior to tabling the legislation. And I go—and I guess, as we go on, a list of the stakeholders that he meets with, not his travel plans; I don't need that. I got enough on my—I don't want to be keeping track of you—or the minister—but a list of the stakeholders, as we move forward, in respect of this legislation.

And I will say, for the House and for the record, that I'm glad to hear that the minister has said that he is open to tweaking the legislation, particularly in respect of privacy. I suspect that the minister has already heard some of the concerns in respect of privacy. So I do want to acknowledge I'm glad that we have it on record that he is open to tweaking the legislation.

I'm going to ask the minister if he would provide us with an update or, I guess, a current status, in respect of other recommendations from Commissioner Hughes's report that his department is currently moving forward on. And, to be clear so

those specific recommendations, in the Hughes inquiry, that he is giving direction on to move forward in his department. Miigwech.

Mr. Fielding: Well, No. 1, we, of course, have been in government for about, I'd say, now, is it seven or eight weeks? I don't know. Minister of Education might be able to educate me—nine weeks? Nine—so we have been in power for nine weeks.

An Honourable Member: Too long.

Mr. Fielding: The member from Riverview believes it's too long, and I'm not sure that is or not, but everyone's up for their interpretation for that.

What I can tell you is, you know, when I got into the office, you know, we are where you are with the recommendations. So, you know, I guess you're—you know, I guess what I would do is maybe I know the member from Riverview is right in front of you—Fort—is it Fort Garry-Riverview? I know—is that what?

He's—so you can—you probably would be best to ask him in terms of, you know, the amount and how come we didn't get more done with it.

My department says that close to two thirds of the recommendations have been done. I can tell you, in the eight weeks since we have been here that two of the recommendations—just in the eight weeks or nine weeks that the Minister of Education talks about—two of the recommendations—one was updated fairly recently, actually. I believe there's a website that looks at it. And that was the Premier (Mr. Pallister) raising indigenous—I believe it was indigenous welfare issues—at the premiers conference. That was updated very recently; in the last two, three weeks.

And the other one, of course, is changing the protection children act, right? And we think that's critical. You know, I won't go into the nuances of the bill. I think we all know, I probably said ad nauseam, but that's because I'm so passionate about it. I think it's a great bill.

So, just within the last eight weeks, we've done two more additional recommendations for the Hughes inquiry. Now, this is something that we inherited. We—you know, we came to office and a lot of—amount of the recommendations weren't completed. I know the Minister of Education, who's here, was the critic in last time, and probably asked a lot of those types of questions of how many of those recommendations have been implemented. I would

say, what I was a little surprised at is that more hadn't been implemented by the time we got into the office.

So we're working on that, but I think having two over eight weeks is a pretty good first step.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister advise what recommendations from the educational task force you will be working and moving forward on?

Mr. Fielding: First of all, I want to take the time to say that the Office of the Children's Advocate just recently talked about the important roles of advancing the rights, interest and well-being of children and youth, and to ensure that indigenous community education is a part of it. So I want to thank their recommendations. I mean, you talked about that in the Hughes report, as well as, I think, bring our children home through the—for the Manitoba First Nations' advocates office, who put that report out, talked about the importance of the education piece, the culturally appropriate education piece that's there. I think the Truth and Reconciliation talked a lot about that.

So I can tell you that there has been some good work done in that. First of all, as I mentioned, the Truth and Reconciliation report talked about the needs for more cultural understanding and education for indigenous history. Really, we want to listen to and work with indigenous community experts, and even some of the people—members of—that talk passionately about the need for educational pieces and culturally appropriate educational pieces, that's a part of it.

We know that there's way too many kids in care right now. I compared it versus Saskatchewan beforehand, versus 11,000 versus 4,000. We think some of the answers is a part of that, and that's why we endorse the Truth and Reconciliation—some of the recommendations that were part of it. I can tell you, as a department, that there is cultural audits that take place within the authorities, which basically looks at the culturally appropriate learnings and education that's a part of it.

* (16:00)

I can also tell you that the authorities—some of the training dollars that are allocated for training, really, across the systems for case workers, supervisors, foster care, et cetera, each authority is able to develop culturally appropriate training for the foster-care parents. And, I think, from children—family services, that we're extremely open to

programming and proposals and any community-based organizations that looks to provide indigenous learnings and education that's a part of it.

I know in three of the authorities there's elder councils that are associated with it that guide us on that direction. And I also know that there is a conference that's coming up, it's—I'll just mention here, I'll put a bit of a plug in here, because I think it's important—on October 28th, it's a symposium, and it's called *Imagining Child Welfare in the Spirit of Reconciliation*, will be happening.

And, you know, is it exactly where we need to be? I would probably say no. Probably more work needs to be done on that. But I think that there is some work that's—I think that there is more than some work that's happening here. And I cited three or four different examples of where they look—you know, they think they—they and the department has focused in on more education, which we think is key.

So we endorse what the truth and reconciliation and the Hughes report and other reports that have talked about the important nature of this.

Ms. Fontaine: So I just want to get a little bit in respect of the legislation that we proposed in respect of keeping children in care in their school that they are already in. And I know that we had identified dollars to—transportation dollars, to be able to support children to be able to stay in the school that they're currently at and not have their education kind of disrupted.

So I'm wondering if there's any movement on that in respect of that particular—or if there's any vision from the minister to pursue that piece of legislation.

Mr. Fielding: I'll take that question under advisement. I don't have the answer for you right now. I want to make sure it's a fulsome answer, and so we'll have to take that under advisement and get back to you when I have the clear information from our department.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that.

Would the minister be so kind as to advise on the current status of the northern agency?

Mr. Fielding: It is currently under administration. We've had some meetings with leadership in MKO and other organizations about that.

Ms. Fontaine: Of course, yes, I'm fully aware that they're under administration. And I suspect maybe

I'll just be a little bit more clear in my answers, I apologize for that.

What is the timeline to bring the northern agency out of administration? How will your department and your leadership ensure that they are ready to get out of administration? And is there a plan to implement the CFSIS in the northern agency?

Mr. Fielding: Well, we—No. 1, we have met very recently with the grand chief of MKO about this issue. I think there has been some progress made on it.

I can't tell you the exact date of when that would happen. I think everyone, you know, we want to work with the grand chief and MKO in terms of addressing any outstanding issues to ensure that it isn't in administration as we go forward.

The second question was related to CFSIS, I believe. And I believe this was something—it could be corrected on, got to look for the Minister of Education, he's very knowledgeable in these things, but I believe the information systems was something identified by Justice Hughes in terms of how that is administered. It has been something that has been reviewed, I think is currently being reviewed for, I think, close to three and a half years.

What I think is critically important is that you are able to ensure you know where children are and all the information that's provided. So, if there's better case management systems, software, systems that are in place, I think we're open to that idea, but, once again, it has been something that we inherited; once again, it's been looked at by the government for, I believe, close to three and a half years. So we think that's probably too long, and we need to review the systems. And you want to make sure you have an effective information system that's in place.

So I probably would advise you to check with some of the members from your caucus to talk about, you know, how long it's taken—why it's taken so long. And we have been here for eight weeks, so we, obviously, want to make sure we're getting it right as opposed to making bad decisions. So we're going to do some due diligence on it, but I think it's something that Justice Hughes talked about, quite handily, in his reports as well.

Ms. Fontaine: I realize the minister, you know, keeps wanting to deflect and—so that I can ask my caucus and, I mean, I—rest assured that I am asking caucus in respect of things that transpired, so rest assured on that.

But my questions are meant for the minister, because he is the current minister. And I know that members opposite keep saying that they've only been in government seven, eight, nine, 10 weeks. Every time we hear that, it's a different number, but, I mean, I just—I'm asking, in particular, this particular minister under his administration in respect of the northern agency and, you know, what is the strategy and what is the plan in respect of bringing them out of administration?

The other thing I would ask the minister is, what is the status of the plan to move CFSIS to Cúram, and is it fully developed yet?

Mr. Fielding: Maybe I'll answer that question with maybe a question. I would assume, you know, we're both new, obviously, to this House and this Legislature, and I'm new to being minister. But I guess the question I might ask back a little bit is I'm assuming you wouldn't assume that we would have an ability to implement—number one, you'd—to do all the due diligence, the background process for implementing a new case management system within, whether it be nine, 10 weeks. That would be completely unrealistic and, to be quite honest with you, I think if you are going to make a substantial change, which I'm absolutely not opposed to, if you'd read what Justice Hughes has talked about, I think there needs to be substantial education and training that would be part of that.

So I'm not going to make a snap decision to do this without seeing a comprehensive plan of how that would be rolled out.

Number 1: Is that still the best system? Is there other systems, whether it be Cúram or other systems that are looked at, whether—what the plan is for education and training? Like, you're not going to just roll out a huge change to the system without having a comprehensive roll-out, communications, education strategy that everyone can buy into, because the worst thing that you could have is to rush into something, and you make some mistakes. And, in these areas, you can't make mistakes, like, you can't. You need to do due diligence. It's got to be comprehensive decisions, and I'm not willing to rush into a decision, you know, after being in elected office for nine weeks. I mean, you need an education and training plan.

So part of that consultation piece that we're going to be doing is, you know, I'll add that to some of the questions that we'll be asking groups and stakeholders as we meet with them, whether it be in

the North or the south or, you know, or inside the city. And, you know, we think that getting it right is more important than making some immediate, snap decisions on things.

Ms. Fontaine: How will the government, or your department under your leadership, approach the critical incident reporting? So, more specifically, how do you define the—a critical incident? How will workers report them, and will there be support and training for workers? And I know that the minister just spoke about training, so I would imagine that there would be—but.

* (16:10)

Mr. Fielding: You know, I'll just—I'll preference this: I don't have my staff here to tell you the exact every detail of it, but what I can say is that I believe it is enshrined in the legislation, if I'm not mistaken, in terms of how you define it and how it's reported. We, obviously, can't, you know, because of privacy laws, you can't get into details of individual cases, I can tell you that. But I think the answers to some of that is is a part of the legislation that outlines the critical incident nature.

So I'll leave it at that. If there's something more I can bring in terms of a follow-up, I'll have to take that under advisement, have to answer that question for you. But I think the legislation outlines the processes and how that works, and so I would assume that our department staff, as these—as critical incidents happen, follow the current guidelines and regulations and legislation.

Ms. Fontaine: Could the minister advise what his department's plan are—plan is concerning the children's special allowance?

Mr. Fielding: Thank you for the question.

You're right, there is obviously changes from the federal level that will be happening—of change of a child tax benefit happening fairly soon, I believe in July. We—this is something that was a standard of practice that the previous government utilized, and this is something that—let me retract that, the last government—this is a standard of practice that was in place from the last government, and there is, obviously, some changes that are happening in the federal level for it. And I guess that will be my final answer, okay.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay. Would the minister be so kind as to share what his plan is regarding the Adult Abuse Registry?

Mr. Fielding: Right, okay. With Adult Abuse Registry, kind of—I'll cut to the chase, but first I just want to bring it into some context. The Adult Abuse Registry, of course, was in 2009. It kind of started in 2009. There was two employees by a non-profit agency funded by Community Living disABILITY Services that abandoned vulnerable persons in a vehicle while they were attending a movie. Existing legislation at the time of the incident did not allow for individuals to be charged. The incident informed government announcement on May 11th, 2011, for the Adult Abuse Registry, as well as new offences under The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act, for abusing and neglecting vulnerable persons with mandatory reporting requirements.

So the adult abuse registry was implemented using almost exclusively existing resources by redeploying staff, absorbing Adult Abuse Registry-related responsibilities into existing staff positions and utilizing internal resources to create technologies—technological solutions to support Adult Abuse Registry.

I'm not going to go—unless you want me to go into kind of the dates and that kind of stuff. I will say that currently the vulnerable persons living with a mental disabilities act and the protection of persons in care act are the only two pieces of legislation that serve specific vulnerable adults and have an investigation capacity built into the legislation.

The use of Adult Abuse Registry could be expanded in the future to define and cover other vulnerable persons that require significant—which would require significant legislative changes. To that point, no decisions have been made.

Ms. Fontaine: Would the minister be so kind as to explain or share his plan for the Manitoba development centre and for its employees?

Mr. Fielding: Okay, I'm going to skip through a number of issues with the Manitoba development centre.

Well, the Manitoba development centre has, in June 1, 2001, has 169 people, persons in care, at the centre right now. I won't go into the salaries and that sort of stuff, unless you're interested in that. I do have some information in terms of the needs.

The majority, 72 per cent of 169 residents in the Manitoba development centre have been diagnosed with severe or profound mental disability; 41 per cent of the residents require a significant degree of specialized care. I could go into the type of

disability. I think I'll maybe hold off, unless you're interested in that.

I will say the Manitoba development centre residents with high-risk behaviours or dual-sensory impairments, deaf or blind, reside in specially designed environments.

There's some information in terms of the programs that are there. For those residents transforming from the development centre, the type of care and services, there obviously is a plan.

Obviously, there was a human rights complaint that was launched, I guess, on large development centres. I'm not sure when that came out, but it did, and so there has been a plan over the last number of years to reduce the amount of people into the community. That plan is ongoing.

And a part of that, I think what's important is to ensure that people, when they do transform into the community, you know, are cared for appropriately. I understand from some of our staff that there has been some changes in some of the Alberta, I think it's Alberta, one of the bigger centres in Alberta has actually stopped that—the amount of people that have gone into the community.

*(16:20)

There is also—I think in Alberta there were some, I believe there were some deaths that were associated with transferring into the community.

So there has been a plan that has been established to transition people in the community, but we want to ensure that people are safe and it's the right assessment of the people that would be appropriate to be transferred into the community in an appropriate time frame.

So I guess that's a big topic, but those are some of the answers in regards to it.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I'm going to take this excellent opportunity to specifically ask our minister a problem that we're experiencing in regards to Manitoba housing in northern Manitoba.

I can tell you I've—I had the opportunity, I walked into an emergency community meeting in Moose Lake. Moose Lake consists of the First Nation community which is adjacent to the community council, which falls under indigenous and municipal affairs, Northern Affairs Act.

Now, the reason why they were having an emergency meeting, because up to 11 families were

going to be evicted from their homes due to not paying rent. And there's two reasons why rent was not being paid by a community that has low unemployment, isolated community with that road that they still want to be paved.

They say, one, the homes that they're living in are—they're rundown homes; they need to be fixed up. They've been trying to communicate with Manitoba Housing to get their homes fixed up. And—but nothing is happening. For example, there's large gaping holes in the windows, so in the winter you can feel the drafts come in. And when I was campaigning there, I just felt sorry for the families, because I would see a baby, you know, on the floor, and I could feel the draft within their homes. One even showed me a hole in the washroom where you can see outside, and it was covered with newspaper. So that, one, they didn't pay rent because of that. They thought, fix our home and then we'll pay this high rent to them.

Two, it's either paying hydro, it's either paying for groceries, and then rent later. So I heard all, each family had their stories as to why they weren't paying rent.

So I would like to know, this is going on with Cormorant, too, as well, another—with that, with the condition of their homes.

Also, too, once they—a single parent got a job within the community and her rent went up according to her salary, right. I would like to know as to why this mother is wanting to quit her job so she can have a roof over her head, because once she declares her salary the rent goes up, and for her to get ahead in that—in her own community, it's nonexistent.

So twice I've heard about two single parents getting a job within the community, rent goes up, they can't afford it, and they quit their job.

So can you tell me the criteria behind the cap that I heard from our own community members that's going to be lifted and the amount is going to go higher?

And Cross Lake—I mean, Cormorant and Moose Lake are not exactly communities that you can move out and have an abundance of selection of homes to move to. So it's either they move out of their community or become homeless.

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

First of all, public housing or—set rents according to rent geared to income scale. And they calculate is based on, basically, 27 per cent of adjusted household income annually. These rents are consistent with nationally accepted standards of affordability. Affordability is based on the shelter of increased rates of 39 per cent. We also, as a government, have done, you know—and, to be fair, we extended out the Rent Assist program, globally, over—I know that's not necessarily addressing just this, but increased that to 75 per cent of median market rates.

I will also talk just a little bit about improvements, in housing conditions and options, in northern Manitoba. So Manitoba Housing will continue to invest in the repair and renovations of housing stock across the province, including select properties in northern Manitoba. These investments result in substantial improvements in many buildings. The deep refresh program and the modernization improvement projects illustrate Manitoba Housing's target obligation to be a good neighbour and maintain and improve Manitoba's social housing stock and contribute to community revitalization efforts. Manitoba Housing also delivers a suite of repair and renovation programs for homeowners and 'landord'—landlords to bring homes up to minimum level of health and safety standards.

Just to conclude here, the communities where there are chronic vacancies or a lack of demand for social housing, Manitoba offers the Rural Homeownership Program. This program provides the opportunity for low- and moderate-income households, in select rural communities, to purchase Manitoba Housing-owned single- and semi-, 'multi-detaxed' properties at a fair market value. And Manitoba Housing currently has 17 homes that are for sale, in 13 communities, under the Rural Homeownership Program. They're single-attached homes containing two to four bedrooms with the exception of one single-detached home.

So there is some work that is being done, to answer your question. I—was it—it was in—was it Cross Lake? I just—I—

An Honourable Member: No, Moose Lake.

Mr. Fielding: Moose Lake. It sounds, to me, that you were saying that there was existing upgrades that need to happen. There's—you said there's holes in walls and that sorts of stuff. I'll have our staff review it and, if there—and it sounds like there is some

critical infrastructure improvements that need to happen, then I'll instruct them to make the changes as soon as they possibly can.

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you for providing that explanation.

Can you share with us, in regards to rural home ownership, what 13 communities 'currately', you said, homes are under that rural home ownership policy?

Mr. Fielding: Right, okay. I—you know, I don't have the exact notes right in front of me, but let me just kind of speak from my position is.

I love this program. I think this makes absolute sense to have home ownership. I truly think that home ownership is something that is part of the equation of allowing people to expand what they can do, their horizons. I think that it makes sense in certain areas. I know for a fact in—there's vacancies in places like Leaf Rapids, for instance, that are there. I think if we can look at this to expand it in a more fulsome way—I do—I'll be—I do like models—and this isn't part of the program right now, but I do like models where Habitat for Humanity.

*(16:30)

Now, I think, this could be changed to more of a culturally appropriate sweat equity; that's a part of that. But I very much like this program. I see this as a—I would like to expand this, as a minister going forward, and I think it makes some sense. There is chronically vacant properties in Manitoba Housing stock that's—it's sitting there. Let's get home ownership. Let's partner. Let's get everyone involved in it. If you can do this, I just think it makes so much sense.

And I'm not trying to get partisan, but I know the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is a big supporter of ownership rights, and he fought for 10 years for property—Aboriginal women's property rights. That's part of it. So I know he's a big supporter of it. In fact, in my mandate letter—and I'll go a little bit more.

There's another program. The government has purchased Manitoba Tipi—I'm going to say the last name, Mitawa Program. It's basically a program with the real estate board and Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs where they're able to provide home ownership. And I think overall—I even got the numbers here for you, the program provides favourable down payments and subsidized mortgage payments for qualified off-reserve Aboriginal first-time homebuyers in Manitoba. The Manitoba

Real Estate Association provides 5 per cent of the down payments; Manitoba Housing provides 10 per cent down payments plus a 10-year 'morrage' subsidy. Over two phases, a total of 15 families have purchased homes between 2008 and '15, with a contribution of just over \$767,000. Manitoba Housing recognizes the opportunity and benefits of the MTM program, provides indigenous families that home ownership is an important way for households to build equity. So part of my mandate letter from the Premier was to look at that program.

So my point is, with both of these—I really like these programs, and we're looking—I would look to partner with any groups as a department to see how that can work. It's got to make sure it makes sense, and there's got to be what I'll call sweat-equity portion of things, whether you use it as exactly the model that Habitat uses, or you change it to more of a—maybe use the family centres, or something, as a culturally appropriate way to use that sweat equity to be a part of it. But I just truly think it's wonderful. And I think that we should expand the current program that we have in place, and we should look at other opportunities as they present in terms of home 'ownership' for indigenous people or newcomers.

So I'm very supportive of it, and I wouldn't be completely surprised to see more focus on this in the months and years to come.

Ms. Lathlin: In regards to criteria for the real home ownership criteria, what—can you explain to me, and—in order to be approved, what income level does a family have to be based at in order to be approved for this program? Because in Cross Lake there was concerns about they didn't make enough or they made too much, and they wanted to know where that medium was in order to be approved for this program.

So they didn't have much confidence in this home ownership, and the community of Cross Lake, there was a couple of concerns there as I visited the community and visiting with mayor and council with the community council of Cross Lake.

Mr. Fielding: I don't have the criteria in front of me. I don't have my staff who would be able to—our staff to—the department staff that could provide more context to it. I will look into it.

I know the—as mentioned, I'll just repeat this quickly, but currently there are 17 homes that have been for sale in 13 communities under the home ownership program. They're all single, detached

homes containing two to four bedrooms with an exception of one semi-detached containing two-bedroom units, list price from \$33,269—I might have an answer for you here, hang on a second—home—household with children is, I guess the bar is \$69,671, and households without children are \$52,253.

I just want to—I'm going to clarify with my department to make sure we're talking about this program as opposed to the home—to the Tipi program that we talked before with the real estate board.

But, anyways, you know my focus on that. I think it's a great program. If we need to, are we open to reviewing the criteria? I think the answer is absolutely. We'd take a look at the criteria for it. I can't tell you exactly the nuances of every criteria because I don't have my staff here that are more versed than me, but I like the program, both of them.

Ms. Lathlin: I'd like to extend an invitation for us to meet and discuss this more thoroughly so I can bring home this valuable information for the constituents of The Pas, and also, too, one of the suggestions from the emergency meeting where we had up to 10—up to 11 families in Moose Lake and in Cormorant, they would like me to ask the department of Housing, in particular with Manitoba Housing, would they ever consider a flat rate in regards to rental instead of them fearing if they raise their income the rent will be raised, especially for single-parent families?

And like I shared with you, two single women had to quit their jobs in order to keep their roof over their head, and also they were quite discouraged that they thought they would be a role model to their children in regards to having employment but had to quit their employment in order to afford the rent, so what would your thoughts be on that flat rate suggestion that would probably help remove barriers to increase their value, you know, within their livelihood and still keep a roof over their head and afford other such things as hydro, groceries, and activities for their children within their own community, and transportation costs just to go in and out to get groceries. I'm speaking about Cormorant and Moose Lake particularly.

Mr. Fielding: You know, I guess what I would say, we'd be more than interested in, if you do want to meet and discuss and we can have those residents—well, I guess they probably—they wouldn't be in Winnipeg—if there's a way to discuss that, we're open to that. I can't give you the details of the criteria but I

think we are open to reviewing it. You know, I'm not going to come out and say we're absolutely committed to changing things because, you know, quite frankly, I can't speak because I don't have the criteria right in front of me. If there's a better way that makes some sense so more people can have access but, you know, I'm always open to that, but I can't commit one way or the other right now, but we're definitely—you know I would definitely commit to reviewing it, seeing if it makes sense and providing the information at our meetings.

Ms. Lathlin: Again, I'd like to extend an invitation for you to visit our constituency of The Pas to gladly show you around our communities and the state of our Manitoba Housing homes. The reason why I was referencing to that flat rate is because when I'm standing there in the community of Moose Lake or the community of Cormorant, you know, the thought of them having to move in order to obtain more affordable housing—if you go to those communities it's not like we have vacancies or for rent signs, you know. There's no apartment buildings, no other additional housing, so that's why they wanted me to ask the minister directly about the flat rate, and so that—I thank you for your comments.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): And I have a few questions about granny suites and I'm really interested in granny suites because at one point I introduced the bill but it was never passed but later on government had committed to a—subsidized by encouraging the granny suites, also it was called a secondary suite. And government, while committing to pay 50 per cent of the total cost up to a maximum up to \$35,000. Is that program still being continued, or what happened to that program?

*(16:40)

Mr. Fielding: First of all, thank you for the question, and I will provide some information. I guess the short answer: the program is still available, and I'll give some background to it. I think you, as mentioned, you were involved in some capacity of it. So you probably know but, just for the record, I will read this information:

Mrs. Colleen Mayer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The purpose of the program is to increase the supply of affordable renting—rental housing to low or moderate income renters and increase the 'fordability' of 'honeomership' by providing rental income to

homeowners. The program is targeted to all municipalities that allow secondary suites. The program is targeted to provide homeowners who live in the dwellings where the secondary suites are developed—these persons are eligible for the funding. Private homeowners must own the property in which the secondary suite is being developed. Applicants must lease secondary suites to tenants that have an annual gross household income below the applicant threshold. The program provides one-time financial assistance equal to 50 per cent of the total construction costs for creating a secondary suite to a maximum of \$35,000 to enable renters to be set to the medium—to below, sorry, the medium market rent. The private homeowner must match at a maximum of 50 per cent of the cost of creating a secondary suite and all costs that exceed the contributions made by MHRC in construction of the secondary suites.

And let me just—we are going to continue to engage with municipalities to promote and, you know, ensure that there is appropriate take-up of the program. So hope that answers your question.

Mr. Saran: I thank the minister for that answer.

As for that detail, I am aware of that kind of program, but I'm kind of concerned, will that program will be kept to continue? I hope that's kept to continue. I want to have some kind of assurance because it was—that program was at one time was proposed by me as a private member. I introduced the bill at that time and later on the department minister at that time committed that \$35,000 and that forgivable loan and the 50 per cent of the total cost, and provided it's approved by the department first and then it started.

And the other thing, under that program, there was one problem. The problem was that a requirement by the zoning—city zoning bylaw, especially in Winnipeg, was too tight and they will ask to have separate furnaces and also fire safety, and I was discussing with the—by telephone with Mayor Bowman, and then later on we had a meeting with Jenny Gerbasi, a representative from the mayor, and it was kind of an agreement. Like their understanding that it—both Department of Housing, Manitoba Housing and also the City respect to department, they will discuss with each other; they will make it user-friendly, and that is where we were going at that time. But, at this point, I'm not sure how far that discussion has gone, because problem like that, my argument was that: If my children can sleep

downstairs without having an extra furnace, without having that kind of fire safety which they were proposing—sure, you can have fire alarms, that's for sure—and why then the people for granny suites or for secondary suites, they have to have that. And I was asking to remove that requirement and make it friendly, user friendly.

So I would ask the minister: What's happening about that discussion? Is it going further? And what is the minister's opinion about that?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I guess the short answer, of course, is it is in the budget. We do, as mentioned, we do want to engage, obviously, with the municipal officials, whether it be this—through the city, I guess, and other municipal leaders, in terms of the uptake of the program.

I know, 'notially,' and I think we dealt with it a bit when I was actually on city council for it, I think it, in a lot of ways, it does make sense. You know, especially, you're trying to promote, you know, people living together with seniors and that sorts. I know the member from—sorry, actually, that time it was the city councillor for St. Norbert that promoted that program extensively. I think you do need to look at the uptake for it. I think that potentially maybe that needs to be promoted more.

But I think, you know, I generally agree that—I, to be honest with you, I don't have the uptake numbers and how, what the uptake has been, but I think it moves in the right direction in a whole bunch of different ways.

I can tell you that it currently is within the budget. And, you know, there's going to be, obviously, performance reviews on all different programs and that sorts, but it is one that I do think there is merit to. If there isn't the uptake that there should be on it, maybe that's an advertising issue, right, and so people know about it. And if there's a way to enhance that in some capacity, I'd be all ears to do it.

So I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Saran: Yes, I'm thankful to the minister for that answer. And all I am asking, just willingness at this point so we can—that program keep continue and also some improvements could be made.

There was other discussion was going on. That discussion was how to get people out of poverty or how to encourage them to get gainful employment, and especially people in the social housing or people

on EIA. And at that time I started a discussion about how we can do and how we can go about it.

And the point was that, let us ask people living in social housing what kind of skills they are interested in. Once they are identified, say, somebody says I want to be a mechanic, let them provide about 40 hours of instructions; not a one-year course, not two-year course—40 hours' instructions. And we'll give him basic theory and safety instructions. Then the department will send them to some outfit in some garage where they will do some work and learn over there and see whether they are interested in it or not.

And the department will, our government, maybe two, three departments can come jointly, and they can provide them minimum wages for three, four months, it won't cost the employer any money at all, but only we have to make sure that the employer gives them proper training.

* (16:50)

And that was in the discussion, but I would ask the minister what he thinks about that idea, because once a person, if he likes it, either he will get a job there or he would—will—he or she will go for training for one year, of the mechanic training in that situation. And that person will get out of poverty or get less assistance as compared to he or she is getting now. It will be beneficial for the government. What's the minister's opinion about that?

Mr. Fielding: Yes, well, first of all, thank you for the question. And you're right. I mean, in terms of poverty, you know, the approach that we've kind of taken is, you know, we think, obviously the—you know—and I won't go too much into detail, but you know the basic personal exemption. We think that taking 2,700 people off the tax rolls is an important piece to it. We also think that housing is an important facet of the poverty, because housing is one of the foundations of poverty, right? If someone doesn't have a house, they don't have proper living areas, then it just—it makes the whole issue of poverty more complex.

So I'll answer a couple of your questions here, too. The—you know, overall, we think that we have invest a lot more money in housing this year. We put \$45 million in and we've increased it by 56 per cent, which we think is fair. We also increased the Rent Assist program. You know, we take a bit of pride in the fact that, you know, we feel that we pushed hard in opposition for this, and it was included in last year's budget, but that takes up 75 per cent of the

median market rent for the housing. In this budget, we also looked at it. The Canadian mortgage housing corporation analyzes and says what the median market rent is, and so we upped that this year by \$7 million, right, to afford it. So I guess what I'm saying is, I think we made some pretty substantial investments in it.

We'll—sounding repetitive—there is a whole bunch of money on the table from the feds, the federal government, in terms of housing. Some of those meetings are ongoing, in terms of how we spend that money. We think that's a part of the answer. Whether they're bricks and mortar or whether they're portable shelter options or whether there's other financial tools, whether it be home ownership or affordable housing or social housing, we think is important.

I won't go into too much of the Rent Assist program but, you know, our budget does include money for the Rent Assist program, which we think is important. In terms of—you touched upon it, but in terms of committing funds for financial literacy to help Rent Assist recipients who may struggle for paying their utilities under the area, you know, there is some information that's a part of it.

We think a combination of all these things makes a big difference and, quite frankly, you know, we're proud of the fact that our budget has increased in these areas where, you know, people have vulnerabilities, right? It's \$175 million more, more money for a whole bunch of vulnerable people in that respect, but—so that's what we think. We think the basic personal exemption; we think investments in housing; we think the Rent Assist program, more of a portable piece in housing is part of the answers to the poverty issues, and also think providing some supports for people, too, as they enter—re-enter the workforce, is extremely important.

So I'm not sure that totally, directly answers it, but it's a combination of everything. Let's face facts. I mean, poverty is—it's a very complex issue, right? And we've seen poverty go up, you know, exponentially over the last number of years, and there's a whole bunch of—you know, there's initiatives; there's get on board, of course, which is initiatives that look at poverty, and there's a whole bunch of things, but the numbers haven't been going the right direction, so we need to change that. We need to ensure that the amount of people that are living in poverty doesn't go up. Like, it's gone up by about 15 per cent, compared to the national average

since 2008. We know that the indigenous Aboriginal people, the amount of people that are living in poverty, has actually increased by 85 per cent since 2008 alone.

So, overall, we're not going in the right direction, but I think we need to work with everyone, including the federal government to—the federal government obviously makes big investments in the homeless piece that's there. And I can tell you, at our federal meetings—federal, provincial, territorial meetings this weekend—that was a focus of the new investments in housing dollars that are going to be there. Whether the homelessness piece is a part of it, they—the federal government, and I think all the territories and provinces, feel that that should be a stand-alone piece, the homelessness. Plus, also, the indigenous community needs to be something that can be addressed.

So a long answer, but it is a complicated issue, and we are pretty proud of some of the investments we made in housing.

And if I could ask, I beg the Chair, would it be possible to propose a—just a five-minute break for a bio break?

The Acting Chairperson (Colleen Mayer): Is it agreed from all parties? *[Agreed]*

We will take a five-minute recess.

The committee recessed at 4:55 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5:02 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Colleen Mayer): Order. We will continue with questions.

Mr. Saran: My question is that we started a kind of a concept that was a seniors' drop-in centre because seniors normally, when they're sitting there in their home, they get isolated and they get bored, and it's not a healthy environment for them. If they go in a drop-in centre where they can get together and socialize.

So last year the NDP put in the Throne Speech that we will encourage drop-in centres, but then that did not get materialized because there was not that much time. And so No. 1: I would ask the minister whether he will keep continue that concept and work on it. Possibly, it can come under family services, or it can come under Housing. And my point is that, if we have small drop-in centres, and it should be in

every corner of the city and every corner of all the cities or towns so that our seniors can go and socialize.

And will the minister work on that concept and advance it further to make materialize it?

Mr. Fielding: Well, anyways, just to answer your question, we provide the group with a conditional letter indicating Manitoba Housing; we're amenable to providing them with a long-term land lease for their proposed seniors drop-in centre and a loan guarantee of up to \$500,000. The commitment is conditional upon the group providing Manitoba Housing with confirmation of the project's approval, financing plan, which they need to provide to us by June 30th, 2016. If they do not provide us with a financial plan by the date, we could cancel the commitment.

So that's the letter. There's a time frame issue that's there to the member; probably be a few days leeway, I would assume, on that, but they do need to get the information back to us by—in the next, you know, distant future, July 3rd.

Mr. Saran: I think that's a kind of a pilot project and I would like to see it. I hope the minister will agree with me because it's really to provide the services to the families, to the seniors, and there's a—well, if we can expand that kind of a program to all areas of the city so seniors can go and socialize themselves over there, and so there's a—and the group the minister's talking about, and because people don't have no house, sometimes it may take longer time than really our department had given them. Maybe they may need extension about a few weeks or a month or something like that. I hope the minister will consider that.

But, beyond that, I want to raise another question. The other question is that sometimes, new immigrants, they come over here, but they have not worked for two years; therefore, they are not eligible to get a mortgage because normally they need two years of history before there can be approved mortgage.

Sometimes they have some money with them to put a down payment, but they don't qualify for the mortgage.

My question and also suggestion is that what about if the government granted their mortgage and that title stayed on the government name, if those people stay in that house, don't rent it to somebody

else, and keep that house, say, two or three years, then they can automatically transfer to those people.

And also another scenario, also there—if they can be helped with down payment and if they stay a certain amount of time, still they can be—that title can be transferred. This will help to keep those immigrants in this—in Manitoba as compared to—less likely they will move to the other provinces.

So my—this is a suggestion, what does the minister think about that? It also will solve the housing problem, and at the same time immigration problem and that movement from Manitoba to the other provinces.

* (17:10)

Mr. Fielding: Well, of course, this is a pilot project so we'd like to evaluate before expanding. You know, I have put my thoughts on the record of things like home ownership and that sorts of stuff, working whether indigenous communities or newcomer communities, so I'm not sure that answers your question, but right now it is a pilot project, so we'll evaluate it and then we'll make decisions. If it makes sense, then we'll go ahead with it. But I can't tell you right now until the pilot is over.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm going to ask the minister, in respect of an ad that appeared in the Portage Daily Graphic on June 28th, and I'm not sure—I'm going to ask the Madam Chairperson, I don't know if I'm able to disseminate this to the minister or so. I don't necessarily want to read out the whole thing, although I can. Just read it out? Or give it to him?

The Acting Chairperson (Colleen Mayer): You may table a copy or you may give it to him if you wish or read it out.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm going to read for the minister. I'm not sure if the minister has seen the ad, unless the minister has seen the ad. Otherwise, I'll just read it out.

And it is a little bit unclear here, but it says—the gist of it is: Share your home with adults with intellectual disabilities. The Department of Families is seeking paid care providers to share their home with adults with intellectual disabilities. We are looking for homes, da da da, to provide respite and permanent placement. Care providers are responsible for the well-being of the individuals in their care. The care provider may be responsible for the administration and documentation of medicines and record-keeping of financial information. Care

providers will provide a home-like atmosphere, while maintaining and enhancing the individuals' skills of independence. Care provider will have experience with adults with intellectual disabilities, as well as knowledge of the vulnerable persons act. And it does go on.

I'm asking the minister if he can tell the House, the committee, how much care providers are paid, whether they receive any type of benefits and how do their pay and qualifications compare with the residential care workers employed by the Community Living disABILITY Services, who were recently awarded a wage increase? Miigwech.

Mr. Fielding: Okay, thank you, Madam—I'm going to call you Madam Speaker, but it's madam chairlady, right?

Anyways, I was actually just made of this ad just in the last 35 minutes or so, so I wasn't briefed by my department. I can tell you that we do post looking for foster families on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of adults with intellectual disabilities. This is not for the people moving out of the Manitoba development centre, as foster parents would not be able to meet the high needs for the MDC.

So this is not related to people moving out of MDC. I do appreciate the concern when reading that. And I know it was just brought to my attention just since question period on that. So, once again, just want to repeat that, as foster—you know, that it's not for people moving out of MDC and—as foster families would not be able to meet the high needs for MDC. So just for clarification on that, we also run the ads in other regions.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

The second part of the question was in terms of pay scales. Pay is really dependent upon support needs, and we can provide other details about benefits later.

Ms. Fontaine: Where are the adults living with these particular disabilities that qualify for these foster homes? Where are they currently housed?

Mr. Fielding: To answer the question, it's living with family in group homes, leaving the child-welfare system, they could be leaving—living independently in the community and require more care.

I think there was some numbers. It increased, last year, by 268 people coming into care.

Ms. Fontaine: How many individuals in—is the Department of Families seeking to recruit to share their homes with adults with intellectual disabilities?

And can the minister reassure the committee today that this will not result in residential-care workers losing their jobs?

Mr. Fielding: Well, we don't have specific targets. And we can confirm that this is not about residential-care workers losing their jobs. This is everyday business for the department.

Ms. Fontaine: So there was two parts to that question, and so I'm going to ask the minister again.

* (17:20)

How many individuals or homes is the Department of Families seeking to recruit to share their homes with adults with intellectual disabilities?

As well, Mr. Chair, my first question on this was in respect of—specifically in respect of the dollars that are allocated to the homes, and I know that the minister had indicated that it was on—in respect of the level of disability, can the minister share the range of dollars that are allocated to these homes?

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you.

We don't have specific targets on homes. We continue to try and grow service options for housing adults in this program, and we can get details on funding for foster families in the next number of days or tomorrow.

Ms. Fontaine: Could the minister advise how this particular—and I know that he keeps referring them—to them as foster homes, what are the mechanisms in place in respect of these foster homes for the health, safety and well-being of the individuals that are housed there with intellectual disabilities?

Mr. Fielding: Well, these are licensed facilities and have to meet the licensing guidelines in residential—it is in the residential licensing act.

Ms. Fontaine: Can the minister advise what type of training do these foster homes or licensed facilities have to go through so the individuals that will have a daily almost 24-7 contact with people with intellectual disabilities, so what are the training guidelines? And, not only that, how does the department ensure that those training guidelines are actually adhered to and that the individuals have gone through the training?

Mr. Fielding: Community service workers are responsible for overseeing safety plans and service plans. We can provide more details on license requirements for training.

Ms. Fontaine: So that is quite a bit of information that you're going to be providing me with tomorrow, so I look forward to receiving that information.

My final question, and I suspect that this will be added to it, but, hopefully, you know the answer to it: What are the mechanisms in which the department actually checks on these foster homes to ensure that the individuals that are living there with intellectual disabilities are actually being cared to—cared for?

Mr. Fielding: Community service workers are responsible for working with clients and foster homes as well as residential care licensing to address safety and to support people living with inclusive lives in the community.

Ms. Fontaine: As fun as it's been all these hours, and I know that we could probably spend weeks and weeks of doing this, Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) is dismissed from concurrence, and we will call up the Minister of Education.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. The Minister of Education's called up, and the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) will begin his questions.

Mr. Kinew: I would genuinely like to thank the Minister of Families. I'm not sure if there was sarcasm on behalf of my colleague or not, but thanks for your time. I do appreciate the answers that you shared.

So, for the Minister of Education, can you provide the committee with some details as to what the Read to Succeed program is all about? Or, rather—let me withdraw that. Mr. Chair, can the Minister of Education please provide the committee with details about the Read to Succeed program and what it's all about?

* (17:30)

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Some details are still in development, in all honesty, but the intent is to focus on early years up to about grade 6. And what we're trying to do with this is actually work with the teachers—most teachers are very well informed as to what level their students are at—and use the existing resources that are in the school, the librarians, the—for workshops, and some of the other resource—extra resource providers that are available in the school to try and get any

students that are not really up to the standard of the rest of the class back to that standard as quickly as possible. There's lots of evidence, and the member, I'm sure, is very familiar with some of this, that this suggests that we, in fact, lose most of our high school dropouts in the—in those years simply by them getting a little bit behind the curve, and though they tend to stay with their peer group, by the time they get to high school, they are disaffected to some degree. And so we're looking for opportunities to get—to keep them together. This'll be focused on the individual student very much. And so it will not be a general, we'll do this whole class; it'll be targeted to the individual student. And that's some of the stuff that we're actually working out in conjunction with teachers in particular.

I'm sure the member knows that many of the teachers we want to consult with and the associations have been pretty occupied this last few weeks of the school year, so we're—we'll be, hopefully, reaching out to many of them over the course of the summer, the associations in particular, but also to individual teachers. And I've had quite a number, actually, reach out to me and saying, you know, this is a good idea, you know, here's some suggestions on how it might be made more effective, and we are certainly listening to those ideas. What we're focused on here is getting better results. And I recognize that the better results might take a few years to show themselves, as often happens in the education system, but you have to start to get where you're going. And so that's certainly how we intend to approach that.

So that in—sort of, in general, will be how it's approached. It is intended to be extra assistance, and there'll be—have to be funding designated for that, and we are working, as well, to develop what that might take.

But I think it's also very important to go back and indicate that we'll be using some of the reporting that exists in the system and the teacher information, whether it comes from the report card or whether it comes directly from other sources from the teacher, to help 'tracksists' students through the system more on an individual basis than has been in past case. It's so that we can identify when, you know, if it's something that happens in grade 7, well, we'll be able to pick it up then rather than waiting to grade 8 or grade 9 before we actually pick it up.

And I think that this is a good approach and, certainly, the advice I've received from some of the

education professionals would suggest that this is a good time to move in that direction. It's timely, and it's certainly been very much encouraged by a number of the teachers I've talked to. Met with the association the other day, a parent group association, and—[interjection]—Manitoba association of parents, yes, I think I've got that one right. I have trouble with the acronym; it doesn't roll off the tongue like some of them do—and brought—ran that idea by them as well, and they were extremely supportive of this initiative.

So we, certainly, intend to work with as many partners as possible. Thank you.

Mr. Kinew: So would the kids have to be under an individual education plan to access this Read to Succeed program, or would they be referred in some other way?

Mr. Wishart: No, they would not have to be under an individual education plan. We're counting on the teachers to identify, in their class, those students that are perhaps struggling a little bit, and we're really focused on literacy, but actually a little bit of evidence and—to indicate that numeracy would actually be kind of come along with the process. So, initially, I think, we'll try it to be designed strictly for literacy, but the numeracy, we're certainly assured, would follow with the success of the student. I think the member knows that when students achieve better results, they are much more positive about the whole education process. And we'll see if we can't actually tie improvements in numeracy to that process.

So that's how we'll be working. But we're going to depend very much on teachers in the classroom to help identify the student. I've had some preliminary discussions with Manitoba Teachers' Society about the role that they might play on this. When I went to their annual meeting and I talked to a number of them as well, in the evening, and they were very support of it—of this approach. And so we're, certainly, going to depend on the education professionals in this province to help us achieve these better results. We think it's very important. Manitoba students are our future. And we need to make sure that as many as possible succeed in the system.

I know the member is very, very familiar with the high school graduation rates that we—and the issues we have with First Nations students, and Metis students to some degree as well, and we want to make sure that we can make improvements in that process. I think Manitoba's future is very much tied

to our ability to get better educations for as many Manitobans as possible. And we will be looking for as many ways as we can to make improvements in that program.

Mr. Kinew: So the minister had earlier made mention that there would be some extra funding needed for this program in the future.

But I'm curious whether there are any dollars earmarked in the current budget towards this program, and if so, what the amounts are.

Mr. Wishart: There are no specific line items in the current budget. As the member knows, we increased funding for K to 3 by over 2 per cent, 2 and a half per cent, and certainly—and some of the development work might be covered in that increase in funding.

We're very committed as a government to improving quality of education, whether it be in the K-to-12 or the post-secondary system. We're certainly working to put things together to make them work as well as can be, as well as we can, within the existent system.

It's a little premature, I guess, to say, you know, what might happen next year. But I expect, and I know that in the discussion and in my mandate letter, that there was certainly an indication that we would probably have to put additional resources in. But we have not developed a number in regards to that.

So I'll count on my colleagues across the floor's support, because I—for that point, as I know he's a big fan of improving education.

Mr. Kinew: With respect to the impact on teachers, does the minister expect that there would be any professional development required? Or is there going to be any sort of implementation impact on teachers?

I'm just curious to see how the rollout is foreseen to impact those teaching in the K-to-12 system—well, I guess the K-to-6 system, more accurate.

Mr. Wishart: I didn't catch the last part of that comment, I'm sorry.

Could you repeat the last sentence?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), he's asking for—repeat your question?

Mr. Kinew: Oh, okay. Yes, I'm curious to know what the impact of rolling this out is going to be on teachers. So will there be professional development

requirements? Or what will the implementation look like from the teachers' perspective?

Mr. Wishart: The comment I had missed was the teachers' perspective. And that's right, it will look somewhat different from the teachers' perspective.

There clearly will be some professional development days involved in this whole process. How many remains to be seen. And any additional resources that have to be developed, of course, would be part of that delivery process.

This is very much focused on the individual student. And I think that, and we're certainly looking at empowering the teachers to provide additional information in the report cards, as well. And we've had some discussion regarding that. The new report cards have some supporters out there, because they do provide some opportunity for more comments than have been in the case previously, but there are also a number of people that are fairly vocal, saying that there needs to be more ability to do that, and that that type of information would be something that we could begin to build on.

* (17:40)

Sometimes a teacher, though they certainly do put comments on there, are reluctant to put too much on there. And we want to build confidence with the teachers so that they are comfortable 'indefied'—in identifying a student that may be not too far off the mark, but falling behind. We want to identify as soon as possible. It's so much easier to take steps earlier and to make sure that everybody stays together, that—I recognize the support that a peer group has through the system and, as much as possible, everyone wants to maintain that.

But, when an individual student gets a little bit behind the rest of his peers, the teachers very often are the very first ones to notice this. It can be as simple as a change in behaviour rather than, you know, an actual measurement of test. And so teachers are the ones that we're counting on to be the front-line professionals in helping us do this, and make sure that we can track individual students and get the very best for the students as early as possible. I think that's very important in the system.

Up until now, we've tended to almost deal with classrooms and then, during the course of the year—and then, at the end of the year, individual evaluations come into play. We'll be moving to the point where we can identify students, we hope, much earlier in the process.

Mr. Kinew: Earlier in his remarks, the minister made reference to tracking students. I'm just curious to know whether there will be any changes to the way students are identified in Manitoba, in particular, whether we might be moving towards a universal student number.

Mr. Wishart: No one's really suggested that at this point in time. They are—certainly, think that—well, I'm—where my colleague was a numbers guy, I'm a people guy. I think people should be identified, and they should be—we track them as individuals. Everybody's different. They have their strengths and their weaknesses.

I'm very reluctant to put a number on a student, and I like to deal with the person. So I've heard no one suggest this up until this point in time, and I would have to be convinced on this particular issue, I'm sure.

Mr. Kinew: I'd just share, as a bit of background, I've heard some conversations about a universal student number potentially being beneficial because within a province-wide system there are sometimes certain numbers that may not accurately reflect what's happening.

For instance, if a student transfers from, say, Brandon University to the University of Manitoba, it might show as—it might impact negatively on the retention numbers for Brandon University, whereas, if we understood that they were merely transferring within province to another school in the system, that the—wouldn't be seen as a discontinuation of that student's studies.

So I'll just put it out there as something that I've heard some chatter about in both K-to-12 and post-secondary schools as something. So perhaps we'll follow up at a later date on that.

I'd like to ask you, Mr. Chair, if the minister could share what his views of standardized testing are within the K-to-12 system—the role of standardized testing within the K-to-12 system.

Mr. Wishart: Just finishing up on the previous question.

We actually do have a bit of a numbering system that's already out there now. Just in the K-to-12 system it doesn't follow them beyond that, and it is used, really, just to keep track of students when they move around from one jurisdiction to another. And so we haven't been tracking marks in association

with this, or anything like that. That's—so there is something out there, if we chose to follow up on it.

The second half of the member's question was? Could you repeat it?

Mr. Kinew: Yes. About standardized testing. Whether the minister could share his views on the role of standardized testing in the K-to-12 education system.

Mr. Wishart: Well, certainly, the two different measures that are out there now, and at different points in time, do give us some indicator. I don't believe that they're an absolute, hard-and-fast result that we can track on, but it is useful. I believe that the information should be shared with the school divisions, and we're certainly moving to that. In fact, we released some data not too long ago to the school divisions. It is in a format that certainly makes it impossible to identify individual classrooms or individual teachers or individual students. We certainly respect everyone's privacy, but it is in a format that indicates general areas where there have been better or worse results, and it's to help us identify where resources will be.

I actually—I mean, you look at PCAP and some of the international measures; I don't put a lot of faith in our comparison to international numbers. I'm not entirely sure that some of the international testing is as random as we know our system is, so I have very little faith in those numbers.

But across western Canada we have had a pretty uniform approach to how the testing results have been handled, and I think that there's some merit in that. I understand that Alberta is having some debate right now about whether they want to continue participating in this. So we'll see what becomes of that.

But I think it's important that we know in general how our system is stacking up with other jurisdictions. I know it's worked in the case of some of the Maritime provinces in the past where they were able to identify areas where they would need to focus a little bit more in terms of resources and additional teaching aids and things like that, and it worked for them in terms of overtime. They did get a response in their results provincially and improved their outcomes, which is what we're all here for.

We want to make sure that the students have the best ability that—perform to the best of their abilities, and so some way to measure how things are going and what programs are working and what programs

aren't working. It's certainly absolutely valuable. We as Manitobans invest heavily in education, and I think it's important that we focus as much as possible on doing that.

I know that the past government didn't put a lot of emphasis on the results, and I know we'll be looking at them more carefully. How much emphasis I think we put on them remains to be seen. If we can find other measures that help us show the results, and it's results we're interested in, not so much the different measuring processes. So I don't know that we're particularly wed to any that—any particular places.

That said, we aren't talking about bringing in testing programs of our own at this point in time.

Mr. Kinew: Could the minister just provide more information on what he's referring to when he says the additional programs that he's looking to bring in?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister—do you want to repeat the question again, the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew)?

Mr. Kinew: Yes, I think at the end of his answer, unless I misheard, he was referring to additional testing that might be brought into place, so if he could just explain what that would be?

Mr. Wishart: Yes, I said no.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, can the minister tell us how the value-for-money audit will be carried out in the Education and Training Department, which staff will be involved and how exactly that will look?

Mr. Wishart: Well, any review of programs has always got to be structured very carefully to make sure it's targeted to the measures that you wish to accomplish. It won't just be a new—the question of looking at the numbers and the dollars.

* (17:50)

As I said, we're interested in results, so we will have to find some way, I guess, to align what information we get, which is partly in testing, partly in the report cards, with the—with where our emphasis will be. We're still working on details in regards to that. We will of course be depending a bit on the consultants engaged on that, and we've had just a call for proposals at this point in time, so we haven't had much discussion with them.

But we certainly want to make sure that Manitobans are satisfied with the education system that we have. During the last 17 years, I think the

member knows what has happened in terms of results, the measures that we do have where we have not, certainly, moved in the right direction. And I don't think that's something I—frankly, he knocked on doors; I knocked on doors. I can tell you the education system comes up quite a lot, and I'm sure with his background in—mostly in post-secondary, he had questions as well. I think that many Manitobans are dissatisfied and want to see better results.

So, I mean, we're certainly looking to be the most improved province in Manitoba—in—sorry, in the country, would Manitoba to be the most improved province in the country. Education is a great place to make improvements. So, we'll certainly be looking at that. It's not just about dollars; it's about results.

And as I said earlier, we really want to focus on the individual student, and I think that's very important that—you know, I don't want to use the old slang term nobody left behind, but everybody we leave behind is a failure on our part, and we want to make sure that we get more people through to the end. And, of course, the immediate goal is more graduates from high school, whether they be First Nations or otherwise. I think our graduation rate is respectable now, but it is certainly not respectable when you break it out based on some communities, and I think it's important that we get everybody up to that mark.

It's part of our future for Manitobans, but I keep going back; it's their future too. It's important that the individual not be forgotten in this process. I think it's very, very critical that we keep a focus on the individual student as much as possible and make sure that we're focused on getting them the best results in the process, not just a general, well, okay, the overall average has improved or the overall graduation rate has improved; therefore, we're doing a great job. If we fail individual students, we fail the sum total as well.

Mr. Kinew: In the tender for the audit, it says that there'll be a project co-ordinator designated within each department. Can the minister tell us whether the co-ordinator within the Education Department has been identified yet?

Mr. Wishart: The answer to that would be no.

Mr. Kinew: Can the minister share with us the process for selecting who the co-ordinator will be within the Education and Training Department?

Mr. Wishart: I'm not sure that I can. I mean, we know we'll be consulted in the process, but at this point, I think that question might be better focused with the Department of Finance, because it's still at that level.

Mr. Kinew: What sort of—when we return to the issue of criteria, specifically, that will be used to evaluate the programs in the value-for-money audit, what sort of benchmarks is the minister looking at using for the evaluation within the audit?

Mr. Wishart: Well, I suspect we'll be looking at sort of general guidelines as—such as graduation rates and the PCAP results and things like that. But to do our job right, we have to drill down from that point and talk about the successes of the individual student. So, we are very likely going to depend fairly heavily on the report cards and the quality of the reporting. We're also going to depend on the individual teachers for information as well.

This is—I mean, it's not designed to completely shake up the system, but it is designed to kind of reprioritize things and to move towards better results for Manitoba students.

So we'll continue to work on developing that. We're certainly hoping that we're going to get some recommendations from whoever is chosen to be part of the process. And I think that that'll be—we'll look with those ideas. But there'll be consultation.

And I actually had some of the same discussion with the Manitoba Teachers' Society president. And we certainly indicated to them and to him that we would be consulting in the process. We're not going to run off in our own direction here without partners. We're going to try and build partnerships and build linkages that—with all of the different players.

The one that actually kind of worries me is how do we get engagement with the parents in terms of what—how this process should work, because I do see parents very much as part of the system. I am one. And I have kids in the system, one in post-secondary now and the other one's still in high school. But there's been times where we felt, as parents, we felt very much left out of the system, and so I think that we needed to make an effort to get some further engagement, whether we do that through the parent advisory councils or whether we try and find a way to go directly to the parent. These days almost every teacher has the emails from every parent and of children in their class. Perhaps that's something we can engage the teachers in working with the parents.

I think it's important that we have strong linkages there as much as possible. I know it's always a challenge. There are a lot of single-parent households out there that are probably running at full speed just to keep going from day to day. So it's hard to add too much to their workload. But there are some that want to—very much want to get engaged.

Certainly, teachers tell us that they hear from parents at parent-teacher days in great lengths sometimes. And so I think that better engagement and a little bit more respectful engagement between the teacher and the parent would be great, because very often when the teachers hear from parents it's when there's been a crisis or things aren't going particularly well with the student. And we want to actually get there before that happens and try and engage the teacher and deal with the additional resources that the student needs before it becomes a question of poor outcomes.

So we'll try and engage a wide range in this process. But the details are still being developed, so, thank you.

Mr. Kinew: Can the minister provide the committee with an update on the status and the funding for deaf education in Manitoba this year?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to say that we are finished now our questioning of the list of ministers for today—*[interjection]*—yes, after the next response, I guess.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Wishart: I had, actually, to give you a good answer, I would have to get back to you on that one. And I will certainly endeavour to do that. I know that time is of the essence here, so I'll try and get a detailed answer.

You wanted just, not just the number, but—*[interjection]*—status, yes, and I will do that.

Mr. Kinew: I think it'll be under advisement, then, we'll just—yes, we'll follow up on that later.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION**House Business**

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House business, could you please see if there's leave of the House to not see the clock until I make a committee announcement?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to not see the clock in order for the Government House Leader to make a committee announcement?
[Agreed]

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the House.

Could you first canvass the House for leave for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to sit concurrently with the House on Thursday, June 30th?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to sit concurrently with the House on Thursday, June 30th? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the House.

I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on June 30th, 2016,

at 10:30 a.m., for an orientation session to consider the following reports—for an orientation session, and to consider the following reports: the Auditor General's Report, Annual Report to the Legislature, dated January 2013, chapter 6, Office of the Fire Commissioner; and the Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated May 2014: section 3, Department of Conservation's Management of the Environmental Livestock Program; section 12, the Animikii Ozoson Child and Family Services Agency; section 20, the Special Audit: Society for Manitobans with Disabilities; and section 21, the Special Needs Education.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on June 30th, 2016, at 10:30 a.m., for an orientation session and to consider the reports and chapters listed by the House leader.

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Madam Speaker: The hour being after 6, the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 29, 2016

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