

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs

Sixth Report

Mr. Dennis Smook (Chairperson): I wish to present the Sixth 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 Sixth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 9, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 4)** – *The Provincial Court Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour provinciale*
- **Bill (No. 5)** – *The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment, Planning Amendment and Real Property Amendment Act (Conforming to Construction Standards Through Agreements)/Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg, la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Loi sur les biens réels*

(ententes de conformité en matière de normes de construction)

- **Bill (No. 32)** – *The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2017/Loi corrective de 2017*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. BINDLE (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Ms. CLARKE*
- *Ms. FONTAINE*
- *Ms. LAMOUREUX*
- *Mr. MALOWAY*
- *Hon. Mr. MICKLEFIELD*
- *Mr. NESBITT*
- *Mr. SMOOK*
- *Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Mr. SWAN*
- *Mr. WOWCHUK*

Your Committee elected Mr. SMOOK as the Chairperson.

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 4)** – *The Provincial Court Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour provinciale*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 5)** – *The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment, Planning Amendment and Real Property Amendment Act (Conforming to Construction Standards Through Agreements)/Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg, la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Loi sur les biens réels (ententes de conformité en matière de normes de construction)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 32)** – *The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2017/Loi corrective de 2017*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Smook: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): I rise today to table the Manitoba Civil Service Commission Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2017-2018 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Asian Heritage Month

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I rise today to recognize and celebrate Asian Heritage Month in Canada.

The month of May is a time to highlight the contributions of Asian Canadians and their contributions to the settlement, growth and development of Canada.

Locally, the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba works tirelessly to ensure a variety of opportunities are available for our community to participate in and learn about the rich history of Asian heritage in Manitoba.

The Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba is a dynamic organization that has been spearheading Asian Heritage Month celebrations for 15 years. Their members are proud representatives from the Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Indo-Chinese, Korean and Filipino community organizations that continue to strengthen the foundation of Manitoba.

Throughout May there will be festivities and events marking the diverse, yet shared, historical and cultural backgrounds of the Asian community.

Although celebration is emphasized, Asian Heritage Month allows us to contemplate and remember the vital influences that have shaped our communities nationally and locally.

For over a half a century, Canadians of Asian descent have contributed to our collective prosperity. From building the Canadian Pacific Railway to the first Sikh Canadians that joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War, and including Winnipeggers John Baboo and John Singh, to Manitoba's distinguished Mr. Philip L. Lee, *[phonetic]* the former Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, we are proud of all their efforts.

As we commemorate the 15th year of Asian Heritage Month celebrations in Manitoba, we also acknowledge that Asian communities around the world continue to come to Manitoba and make it their home. Their contributions to the economy and quality of life in our province are invaluable.

I encourage all Manitobans to join Asian Heritage Month celebrations and activities.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the merry month of May marks Asian Heritage Month, an opportunity to celebrate our province's rich cultural diversity and highlight the important contributions Manitoba's Asian community have made in building our province.

As Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary, this year's Asian Heritage Month theme is Celebrating the Contributions of Asian Canadians: Canada 150.

While the contributions of Asian Canadians have not been always fully celebrated or recognized, many have nonetheless acknowledged they had a lasting impact on our province. In every aspect of our society, from arts and culture to science and government, generations of Asian Canadians have made their mark and helped shape our province's history.

Today, Manitoba's Asian community is diverse, thriving and continues to grow. With representation from nations all over Asia, including India, China, Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Pakistan, just to name a few, their combined presence is a key part of Manitoba's rich cultural fabric. These communities have helped Manitoba become the prosperous, multicultural and multilingual province that we are proud of today.

Throughout this month, events are being held across the province to celebrate Asian Heritage

Month and I would encourage all Manitobans to attend.

I would like to thank all of the individuals involved in these events for their time, dedication and commitment to sharing their culture with all Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

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

Ms. Lamoureux: I'm happy to rise today and speak to Asian Heritage Month. This month has been celebrated for nearly 40 years and this year marks 15 years since the Government of Canada signed an official declaration to designate May as Asian Heritage Month.

The reason we recognize Asian Heritage Month is because it's an opportunity to acknowledge the very rich history of Asian Canadians, their amazing contribution to our economy and to the growth and prosperity they have shared with all of us here.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba makes me so proud when celebrating Asian Heritage Month and that's because we have countless events, associations and community gatherings in celebration of our diversity.

This strong celebration of cultural heritage is one of the reasons I pursued politics and why I am such a strong advocate for immigration here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I would encourage the members of the House to attend all of the pavilions this year at Folklorama and check out some of the countless cultural events throughout the year. You won't regret it.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Crown Services, on a ministerial statement, and the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Dan Guimond Retirement

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce that

Mr. Dan Guimond has announced his intention to retire from the position of president and CEO of Manitoba Public Insurance. Mr. Guimond's planned departure date is March 16th, 2018, subject to recruitment of his successor and transition of responsibilities, which will be overseen by the corporation's appointed board of directors.

* (13:40)

Throughout his nearly 30-year career with Manitoba Public Insurance, Mr. Guimond has been driven by a desire to provide Manitobans with superior and innovative insurance products and services while ensuring automobile insurance premiums remain stable, predictable and among the lowest in all of Canada for comparable coverage and service.

In his three years as president and CEO, Mr. Guimond has been committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to achieve important strategic objectives. This includes building strong partnerships with the insurance brokers of Manitoba, who deliver services in nearly 120 communities throughout the province; partnerships with law enforcement and others who share a strong interest in road safety; and collaboration with the Public Utilities Board of Manitoba on the automobile insurance rates to be charged under the basic compulsory insurance program.

Mr. Guimond also achieved an historic level of co-operation with Manitoba's collision repair industry, leading to a new agreement for collision repairs that helps the industry to prepare for rapid changes in vehicle design, construction and advanced technologies affecting the reparability of vehicles. Of course, this was all done for the benefit of vehicle owners in our province, who can be assured the safety of repaired vehicles is never compromised if involved in a subsequent collision.

Also of note is Mr. Guimond's oversight of many coverage and service enhancements to Manitoba's personal energy protection plan during his time as president and CEO. Under this program, Manitobans who are injured in motor-vehicle accidents anywhere in North America receive guaranteed access to energy-injury compensation benefits regardless of fault, including coverage for unlimited medical and rehabilitation expenses necessary to maximize recovery and restore quality of life to catastrophically injured Manitobans, to the maximum extent possible.

As Minister of Crown Services, I wish to personally thank Mr. Guimond for his passion, expertise, commitment and leadership of Manitoba Public Insurance.

Over the coming months, MPI's board of directors will be overseeing the process to choose a successor for Mr. Guimond and will ensure an effective transition process.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement.

For the past three years, Dan Guimond has served as MPI's president and CEO with dedication and passion. Today, we learn that Dan will be retiring after many years of service to MPI.

Dan worked for the MPI for over 20 years before becoming the president and CEO of the corporation. During his time, he's held various positions including vice-president strategy and innovation, and chief information officer with Manitoba Public Insurance. In this role, he was responsible for the management and administration of the corporation's automobile insurance products and services, duties that undoubtedly influenced his role as president.

I know that Dan has an exceptional grasp of the many complex technical issues involved with vehicle insurance. I know he's always been looking ahead on a number of issues, including cutting-edge repair technologies and the prospect of driverless vehicles.

It wasn't that long ago that the minister responsible for MPI was entitled to, and thought it was worthwhile to, speak directly with the CEO of MPI. I hope the current minister has been able, at least indirectly, to tap into Mr. Guimond's knowledge.

Now, as New Democrats, we are believers in public auto insurance. Of course, we've showed that in Manitoba, affordable insurance rates and good benefits go hand in hand. Manitobans expect to get good value on their vehicle insurance, and for a great many years, they have. Manitobans continue to benefit from the excellent service and low insurance rates that public vehicle insurance brings, helping to solidify as Manitoba's affordability advantage, an advantage which I sincerely hope will continue, and Dan Guimond has played a key role in this.

On behalf of our NDP caucus and all Manitobans, I'd like to thank Dan Guimond for his

commitment to MPI and wish him all the best for a happy retirement.

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

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

Ms. Klassen: On behalf of the Liberal caucus—my colleagues, the member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)—we wish Mr. Daniel Guimond a very happy retirement.

We want to thank him for his decades of service to our province and to the dedication to keeping Manitobans safe on the roads. We can go on again about all his wonderful accomplishments, but that has been well captured by my colleagues.

So we want to say that we are sure he will be greatly missed by his co-workers and wish him a lot of joyous time with his family.

Congratulations on your retirement.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade on a ministerial statement.

And I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

National Mining Week

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): May 8th to 14th is National Mining Week, a week that celebrates the important role mining plays in communities across Canada.

Manitoba's mineral resource sector is a strong contributor to our provincial economy, creating good jobs and supporting northern and remote communities. Our government recognizes Manitoba's incredible potential for economic development and growth, which includes responsible resource development.

Although Manitoba was recently ranked the second most attractive jurisdiction for mining investment in the world in the 2016 Fraser Institute survey of mining companies, we recognize there is much more work that must be done. Our

government is supporting this vital engine of economic growth by eliminating red tape and expanding trade opportunities to attract investment into the province's mineral resource sector.

In Budget 2017, we announced the continuation of the Mineral Exploration Tax Credit to encourage and promote mineral exploration in the province. This measure will help companies remain competitive, boost exploration and support the industry as a whole.

I encourage all members to join me in celebrating National Mining Week and recognize the important role of this industry in Manitoba's economy. And we appreciate all the good work that the industry does and the many workers that support this industry.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): This week marks National Mining Week, an opportunity to celebrate the important role of mining industry in Manitoba. In this province, mining is the second largest primary resource industry and employs around 6,000 Manitobans.

As a representative for the constituency of Flin Flon, I know just how important the industry is for our community. In northern Manitoba, we have a rich history that's been strengthened by jobs and infrastructure created by the mining industry. Smart, strategic investments in mining, health and education will mean good jobs for our young people and help families to raise their kids in the communities they grew up in.

Unfortunately for many families in the North, this is not what they're seeing from this government. All they're seeing is a government that continues to sit on its hands while hundreds of northern workers are facing layoffs, layoffs at Hudbay in Flin Flon and Vale in Thompson.

They know that this government's cuts are not the key to unlocking the North's potential. People in Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids are looking for this government to show leadership by investing in mining to give their communities a future. People in the North deserve better from this government. So far, they've seen nothing to spur investment or growth in the North other than some sticky notes on a board at their Look North sessions.

Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today in celebration of National Mining Week. Mining plays an important role in the lives of Manitobans, and we enjoy the products of our mining industries every day.

Most of us would not have to look too far around us to see the benefits of Manitoba mines: the battery in your cellphone, a piece of treasured jewellery or perhaps even the beautiful Tyndall stone that we enjoy here in our Manitoba Legislature. According to Manitoba's Mineral Resources, our province produces 100 per cent of Canada's cesium, lithium and tantalum. Several of our other active mines produce metals, including copper, nickel, zinc and gold.

* (13:50)

Mining brings important industry to our province and, in particular, to our North. These industries employ close to 6,000 workers directly and support our economy indirectly in many ways.

Manitoba Liberals are supportive of our mining and its efforts. There is great potential in our province for mining, and Liberals are strong believers in mining sustainability.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MSPrebiotics Inc.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): Madam Speaker, we all know that Manitoba has a rich agricultural heritage, and the long-term success of our economy relies on a strong and thriving agricultural base, but Manitoba's potential does not stop at our farms; it starts there. Innovative food-processing companies and agriculture spinoffs are expanding the footprint on our economy and leaving their mark on the fabric of our province.

MSPrebiotics, located in Carberry, Manitoba, in my riding of Agassiz, is one of those companies. CEO Earl McLaren and his brother Derek have been partners in business for more than 40 years. They got their start on a potato farm near Carberry. They saw an opportunity. By extracting digestion-resistant

starch from potatoes, they were able to create a new product to support digestive health.

Their new company experienced great success within the agricultural industry but, again, it didn't stop there. Clinical trials at the St. Boniface Alberten [*phonetic*] research centre showed that MSPrebiotic significantly increases the abundance of good bacteria, reduces bad bacteria, and proved that their product can have an array of positive impacts on human health. Today, MSPrebiotic is available in health stores from Toronto to Winnipeg.

And thanks to their hard work, investments and ingenuity, the McLaren brothers have expanded their Carberry plant, doubled their staff and are looking ahead to a very bright future as global awareness of their brand grows.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members of the House today to join me in celebrating the success of MSPrebiotics, as well as Earl and Derek McLaren and this wonderful story of Manitoba entrepreneurship.

Woodhaven Community Club

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I would like to rise today to recognize Woodhaven Community Club. Woodhaven Community Club is a non-profit, volunteer-run organization in the heart of Woodhaven that's open to residents of Woodhaven and the general public. Woodhaven Community Club is the heart of our community in Kirkfield Park and really is a meeting place for friends, families and neighbours all over the community.

Woodhaven hosts many community events, whether they'll be consultation sessions, things like town hall meetings, things like wedding socials that are there. Woodhaven also hosts annual community get-togethers like the Christmas on the Hill that brings together close to 500 people in Woodhaven and the annual spring dinner, which happened just last weekend, and they do accept you no matter what costume you wear, Madam Speaker.

Woodhaven Community Club is located at 200 Glendale Boulevard in one of the most beautiful, neat and natural areas of St. James on the—bounded on the Sturgeon Creek, the Assiniboine River, St. Charles golf course and has a true old-country feel to it.

The homes of Woodhaven existed—as exist today were built in the '40s and '50s when the main streets were laid out, and it is something that has been there

since the early days. The foundations of the home discovered by the river banks at the golf course were believed to belong to Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière and his wife Marie-Anne. Marie-Anne, of course, is the grandmother of Louis Riel.

Woodhaven is also known to have one of the best hills for tobogganing with your families, and I can tell you personally with—growing up as a boy, I spent a lot of—many nights on the hockey rinks and I spent—to this day, I go with my family tobogganing on a biweekly basis anyways with it.

I would like to recognize the many volunteers in the community organizations that's a part of this that makes Woodhaven Community Club tick on a everyday basis. I want to thank you on behalf of the community of Woodhaven. I know the president's here, Mr. Mike Weber—I'd like to stand up and recognize you.

Thank you very much.

Siloam Mission

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, last Thursday, MLAs from all sides of the House attended a breakfast in honour of Siloam Mission, which celebrates its 30th birthday this year.

Each year, nearly 9,000 volunteers invest over 85,000 hours to serve over half a million meals, co-ordinate 15,000 visits to clothing rooms and host 40,000 overnight stays.

But wonderful as a hot meal and a warm bed are, Siloam also provides vocational training, health services, counselling, a women's shelter, a housing and mentorship program for at-risk Aboriginal youth, an afternoon gym, haircuts, tax return preparation assistance and access to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

Through 30 scorching summers and freezing winters, sometimes missing Christmas or summer holidays, a comparatively modest staff, supported by a much larger number of committed volunteers, put time and money aside to help Winnipeg's homeless.

With three decades of evidence, we see that Siloam's work is not in vain. Some who once received help are now helping others, and many who give find they receive much more in return.

Madam Speaker, I ask that this House join me in honouring those from Siloam mission who join us in the gallery this afternoon.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Rossmere.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to have the names of our guests in the gallery to be recorded in Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to record the names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Jim Bell, Jennifer Ferguson

International Nurses Day

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): May 12th marks International Nurses Day, and all this week our caucus has joined with people around the world to celebrate, honour and thank nurses for the contributions they make to health care and the welfare of patients and families.

Across the province, nurses play a vital role in keeping our communities healthy, and I personally know many of the nurses that live and work in my constituency. From tending to our grandparents who are living in personal-care homes to co-ordinating patient care, educating the public and helping our fellow Manitobans recover from surgery at our hospitals, nurses support not only the patients, but also their families and loved ones.

Recently, nurses have taken on a new role as advocates for our larger health-care system by rallying with the public to stand up to the biggest cuts to our health-care system in a generation.

Nurses understand acutely that this Conservative government's continuous pressure on the health-care system is going to hurt front-line workers, patients and families. The Premier's (Mr. Pallister) decision to close three emergency rooms is going to affect their ability to provide quality patient care. They believe, as we do, that this government needs to stop thinking only about the bottom line and start thinking about the front line because that's where health care matters in our province.

Madam Speaker, today's nurses are working harder than ever before to make sure our families and communities are healthy. They need to know they are supported, and they need to know that they have a strong future here in this province. That's what we should be thinking about as we honour them this coming Friday.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Group

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Today I'd like to recognize the Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement group.

In 1987, a group of individuals interested in bettering their local fisheries became actively involved in fishing management activities. Their mandate includes conducting fisheries research, enhancement and education. Their passion has spread throughout our community with new partnerships being created every year. The group's efforts have been recognized at both the provincial and federal levels. They believe when fisheries are improved so is the community surrounding it.

This group works hard to enhance our fisheries and educate the general public on the methods, needs and the importance of preserving and improving habitats for game fish species. Since 1987 they have been educating the public through presentations, seminars, fishing derbies and promotional signage. They've held family fishing days, fishing trips with school groups and offer a five-day fish course for young anglers.

The group has been extremely successful applying for funding through the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund, resulting in securing \$944,000 for a diversity of qualifying projects. The group's data collection efforts contributed to proactive management changes to the existing transfer and stocking programs. Just recently, arctic char and musky were reintroduced to the Duck Mountains. In addition, they've initiated a cost-effective zebra mussel detection program.

* (14:00)

A highlight of their fundraising initiative is the traditional shore lunch banquet, which takes place annually the last week in April. The recent 31st banquet attracted 600 angling enthusiasts, featured all-you-can-eat fried walleye and smoked whole pork. It's events like this that enable this group to continue great work.

With ongoing support from angling community and a board driven by passion, the group will continue to make substantial impacts now and for the future.

Madam Speaker, I ask everyone to congratulate and commend this dedicated group—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions we have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

We have seated in the public gallery from École Lagimodière, 32 grade 7 and 8 students under the direction of Nicholas Messner, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé).

Also in the gallery we have members of the Manitoba Youth Delegation who are the guests of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma).

And also seated in the public gallery from Collicutti Student Voice Program, 15 grade 4 and 5 students under the direction of Fatumah Mbabaali, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Accountability Performance Record

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): For months the Premier has refused to answer important questions in this House. It's clear why. He says that he will listen to front-line workers, then he closes his ears. He says he will protect patients, then he closes a QuickCare clinic and urgent-care centre. He says he wants all hands on deck, but then he takes a 20 per cent salary raise.

Why does the Premier say one thing and do another?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, apart from the pure falsity of the raise accusation, Madam Speaker, which applied to the previous government but not to this one, I would like to say to the member and all members, thank you for the work during the Estimates process. I think it's a really important part of our process. It's one that also is one that can be attended by the public, and I also wanted to thank the members for their work in that respect.

And we've been, of course, trying to accommodate the members of the opposition in respect of the activities of the House and we'll do—continue to do so in every possible way as we move forward as we work together to make the process work for the best interests of Manitobans.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier says one thing and does another, and he doesn't want to be held accountable.

Madam Speaker, he promises 97 per cent disclosure of value-for-money reviews, then he packs it in his suitcase and won't share it. He promises a stronger democracy, then rewards wealthy donors while restricting voter access. He promises affordability, then jacks the costs for seniors, students and everyone else.

Why isn't the Premier interested in answering to many Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I am, Madam Speaker, and our—my colleagues are and this government is very, very focused on improving accountability and transparency in every possible way. We've also tried to, and will continue to make efforts to work in co-operation with members of the opposition whether in the official opposition or the Ottawa-west contingent.

But I also want to say that we did receive communication two days ago from the House leader for the opposition saying that he wanted us to suspend the Estimates process and focus on bills, and so we accommodated them yesterday in doing that. And I was somewhat disappointed to hear that the member from Minto was communicating to the people out through the media that we were hoping to get away from accountability when we were actually working to co-operate with the members opposite.

I suggest that the members opposite get their act together and communicate with each other. Communication is important, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable interim Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Marcelino: The Premier says one thing and does the other. That's why we launched an Ombudsman's review of the Premier's communication. The Premier says he stays in constant contact while away in Costa Rica.

Madam Speaker, why won't the Premier answer simple questions and straightforward—be

straightforward about his communication and so many other important issues?

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Pallister: Sorry, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much.

Thank you to the member for the sequencing of her questions because it allows me to say that although we are following very accurately the practices and protocols on communication exercised by the previous government in every respect, we are looking to improve upon them.

One way we are improving on them is that when I take my infrequent breaks, I don't submit a bill for Manitobans, at all, for my phone. Not a bill, not a penny, not a nickel, Madam Speaker, do the taxpayers of Manitoba have to pay.

And so I would just mention that because I understand that is not the practice of the members opposite, and that at least some of them have submitted bills for as much as \$5,000 for the use of their phones to the people of Manitoba. I won't do that; my colleagues won't do that, Madam Speaker, because we're doing what we said we'd do. We're fixing the finances of this province after a decade of debt.

Premier's Schedule Staff Communications

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, Madam Speaker, the Premier's told us many, many times over of his entitlement to leave the province of Manitoba for weeks and weeks at a time several times a year to escape to Costa Rica. He also claims he stays in regular contact with his staff, giving them guidance on sensitive files. But, surprisingly, this Premier has refused to confirm the most basic of details: how he actually stays in communication with his staff.

I hope the Premier can put this issue to rest this afternoon. Does he actually speak with his staff by telephone when he's down in Costa Rica?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I don't really like to accuse the member of anything he hasn't accused others of or accept accusations from him that he hasn't made to his own former leader. He is continuing to attack me on the same basis that he attacked the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger),

who was in his party, so I should expect no different treatment and don't.

That being said, Madam Speaker, during my infrequent breaks with my family, I endeavour to stay in touch with my office on a regular basis. I adopt the same protocols and protections that have to apply to confidential information the previous government used—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and I am very conscious of the need to make sure that confidential information is protected and will make every effort to continue to do so.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, again, we have a Premier that can't answer a very, very simple question. He claims that he has all kinds of contact, but records from his own office obtained through freedom of information requests show that not a single telephone call and not a single email from Costa Rica has been documented so far.

In fact, we've had to ask the Ombudsman's office to become involved to try and find any proof of any calls from any phone in Costa Rica from this Premier

I would hope the Premier can simply come clean today and indicate to the House: Does he communicate with staff during his lengthy stays in Costa Rica at all, and if so, how does he do so?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, it must be a source of amazement to the members opposite to watch a unified and organized political party in action.

Madam Speaker, the most regular forms of communication that they had with one another when they were in government were throwing arrows at each other and stabbing each other in the back, so I'm not sure that the regular communication they depicted to Manitobans demonstrated capability in government or not.

* (14:10)

Frankly, Madam Speaker, the member opposite demonstrated his own integrity and the malleability of it when he rebelled against his former leader and colleagues, and said he could no longer serve with integrity, when at the same time, as soon as that leader was chosen again by the members of his party he jumped on board and was all ready to glad handle.

And, Madam Speaker, this is not consistency. This is not a depiction of integrity. That is what we are putting on display for the people of Manitoba and that is what we will continue to do.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, there is some amazement by this caucus. And it's a part-time Premier who appears to be completely unplugged from his role as the Premier of this province for months each year in Costa Rica. There's no evidence, Madam Speaker, that he's doing the work he claims to do, and the Premier, if he truly wishes to be open and transparent, he should stop dodging the question and actually answer the question being posed to him. The people of Manitoba deserve no less.

How does he communicate with staff and why won't he answer the question?

Mr. Pallister: Two questions there: How do I communicate with staff? Very well.

And how do I guard the secrecy and confidentiality of documents? The same way the previous government did, only better.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Workplace Safety Priority Inquiry

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It's the 20th anniversary of the North American national occupational health and safety week, and in Canada we are honouring the memory of the victims of the Westray mining disaster. It's more important than ever to emphasize that guaranteeing the health and safety of workers must be a top priority of governments and employers, as it is for unions and workers.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade: Does he agree that the health and safety of workers is the No. 1 priority for this government?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Yes, we believe that worker safety is very paramount to this government. In fact, that's why just last week we launched the review of the workplace health and safety act. We think this will be a very good opportunity to engage the business community, workers and, certainly, all of

Manitobans in terms of their views in making workplaces more safe here in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Lindsey: I'd like to table a letter from this minister. In it he demands that the process to determine the levels of occupational exposure limits for dangerous contaminants like silica and manganese be changed by June 30th.

The minister did not demand that strong worker safety guidelines were the No. 1 consideration. His No. 1 consideration was economic feasibility and competitiveness.

Why is this minister not making health and safety of workers the No. 1 priority?

Mr. Cullen: I do actually appreciate this question from the member.

Certainly, part of that review, we're going to look at process and we believe there was a flawed process with the previous government. So we're asking the committees to have a look at the process to make sure the processes are right and not being driven by government policy, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, this minister is ordering a change in the process for setting OELs because of his new mandate. OELs protect workers from short- and long-term health problems like hearing loss, liver damage, cancer, serious ailments and death. But, apparently, adopting the protection set out by international authorities on how to protect workers is not the best practice for this government.

Can this minister explain why his mandate changed from protecting workers to protecting the economic interests of employers?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we want to put Manitobans to work and we think that's the important thing to do.

Certainly, EDC had a presentation today at lunch about trade and putting Manitobans back to work. We know where we stand on trade; we're not sure about the NDP. One member from Fort Garry said, we put our emphasis into making sure that we reduce trade barriers. Another member, the member from Flin Flon, said—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: –he stands against these kinds of trade agreements. Maybe the members opposite should have a conference call and figure out their views on trade.

Customary Care Legislation Request to Reintroduce

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): At one point in my home community–

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: At one point in my home community of Sagkeeng First Nation, about 13 per cent of our children were under the care of CFS—more than 400 children, Madam Speaker.

This crisis, along with the tragic death of Tina Fontaine, led to the creation of the Circle of Care pilot project. This project, supported by our NDP government, helped to keep upwards of 50 children with their families.

Circle of Care was a part of the NDP's customary care bill, which this government has refused to revive as legislation.

Will the Families Minister commit to be—bringing back the customary care bill?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): We know that having the amount of children in care that we are—inherited from the previous government is something that we need to fix. It's unacceptable.

We've taken strong steps with The Protecting Children Act within our first 100 days. We've taken steps in terms of accountability and transparency in terms of the advocate for children and youth. We've taken a robust approach to this.

This is something, as well, that we introduced in terms of the Throne Speech, where we're going to have a comprehensive review of the Child and Family Services.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Parents in the Circle of Care project received fast-tracked entry into treatment programs so that families struggling with addictions were able to access issues further and work the steps necessary to put their family back together. Once children had been apprehended, parents were offered an opportunity to gather with family, social service organizations, community members and elders to

create a plan that was right for them. A recent evaluation of the Circle of Care highlights the benefits fast-tracked entry had for families and their CFS workers.

Will the Families Minister bring back the customary care and get parents in CFS immediate access to supports that they need?

Mr. Fielding: We have taken immediate steps in terms of dealing with the CFS system. We think that the numbers that were left, having a 87 per cent increase in the amount of kids in care, is unacceptable.

We've taken strong first steps. We want to look at all models that work. The model that she had mentioned, that the members opposite mention, is one that has seen some success. We'll be introducing our comprehensive review to repair the child-welfare system in the coming months.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Our customary care bill was about lifting up First Nation communities along with their children and finding solutions that worked for each family. It used traditional indigenous values of collaboration and community to create a program that ensured parents who had children apprehended could reach out and ask for help.

Provincial Court Judge Roller says the project is more immediate—and I quote—more immediate, more personal and more humane. She argues that helping families resolve issues outside the courts is the best way to find the most efficient solution.

Will the minister commit today to bring back the customary care legislation?

Mr. Fielding: The concern that I have in terms—and our government has—in terms of the approach the previous administration took is the growth of the amount of children in care that would be part of it. The legislation that was introduced in the dying days of the last administration is something that our House leader, at that point, our Opposition House Leader at that point, asked to be prioritized, and that government failed to do that.

We have a comprehensive plan to address and reform the child-welfare system. We'll be doing that upon—along with our legislation that we've introduced in terms of The Protecting Children Act, Madam Speaker.

* (14:20)

Urgent Care Centres and ERs Peachey Report Recommendations

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): On page 203 of the Peachey report, recommendation D-04 clearly states, quote, that the emergency departments in the other three community hospitals—that is, the Seven Oaks, Victoria and Concordia hospitals—should become urgent-care centres.

Will the minister be following this recommendation of the Peachey report?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Mr. Peachey, who was hand-selected by the NDP and commissioned by the former government to do the report, laid out on page 62 how he believed the health-care system in Winnipeg should be structured. He specifically indicated there should be two subacute units and three emergency departments working 24 hours-7.

In fact, I'm glad that he came to our announcement when the announcement was made by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and endorsed the plan, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: If the minister would have read past page 62, he would have seen that Dr. Peachey has lots of recommendations and not all of them involve cuts to our health-care system. In fact, on page 203, under recommendation D-08, Dr. Peachey says, and I quote: Where it is determined independently—that is, in this case by the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) apparent political interference—quote, that the Emergency Department will close or change to urgent care, the clinical governance will assess whether replacement regional services are available or can be made available. End Quote.

Has the clinical governance does—done that assessment and, if so, what did their findings show? Were the regional options for the projected 100,000 displaced patients throughout our city?

Mr. Goertzen: And, Madam Speaker, the member is correct that beyond the specific recommendation on how the system should be aligned, that Dr. Peachey indicated were three emergency rooms and two subacute units. He also recommended things like enhanced home care, and that's why we were glad to accept the recommendation to bring in enhanced home care where 1,200 people each and every year

who would otherwise remain in hospital will be able to go home under the new system.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the fact is that the Peachey report is the sole justification that this Premier has given for closing our emergency rooms, and it's clear that they're picking and choosing only the parts of the report that fit their narrative and ignoring the rest.

Every other health expert, every other health professional, every person on the street understands that cutting ERs in a community not only hurts that community, but overloads the rest of an already overburdened system.

The—this minister has put the bottom line over the front line and made the biggest cuts to our health-care system in a generation.

Will he reverse this decision and keep our community access to health care open?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm sorry that the member would say that about health-care professionals such as Dr. Jack McPherson who attended the announcement; Dr. Eberhard Renner who attended the announcement; Dr. Bruce Roe who attended the announcement; Dr. Alec Chochinov who, in fact, is the president of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians; and, of course, Dr. Peachey; Chief John Lane was there, and many others.

The member simply isn't paying attention. The justification, the sole justification for making changes was the record, the abysmal, the horrible wait times that came up under ERs under that government, Madam Speaker.

Misericordia Urgent Care Centre Government Reason for Closure

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, in the last two decades the Misericordia Health Centre Foundation and the Urgent Care Centre team have developed, together with the Buhler Eye Care Centre, an extraordinary centre of excellence. The Urgent Care Centre has the highest patient satisfaction rates and the shortest wait times of all urgent-care and emergency rooms in Winnipeg—and a balanced budget.

Last week hundreds of people rallied to save the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre.

I ask the Minister of Health, who has said he plans to eliminate the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, just to be sure: Is this his final answer?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, the final answer that we have given as a government is that wait times that stretch eight, 10, 12 hours is simply not acceptable in a health-care system. Manitobans deserve when they go to an emergency room to actually get care. They deserve when they move to an urgent-care centre to actually get care.

It is our final answer that we're going to fix the problem, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Gerrard: But they do get care at the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre and they're very satisfied, so why is he closing it?

Madam Speaker, we know, as the minister himself has said, that he's adopted the recommendations of the NDP's Peachey report, a report commissioned by, and first presented to, the NDP government. The minister himself said on Monday, and I quote, we are following the NDP recommendation.

But the Peachey report does not specifically recommend that the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre should be closed. Yet the minister wants to abandon the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre.

I ask the minister: Is this his final answer?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, we have made it clear that we are going to fix the problems when it comes to long wait times. Dr. Peachey indicated there should be three emergency rooms and two subacute units, and the NDP commission report said that clearly.

So he's talking about final answer, maybe he should phone a friend that doesn't cost \$5,000, Madam Speaker. But if he phoned that friend, that friend would say they shouldn't have to wait eight hours in an emergency room.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I've talked to many people and they say that the shortest wait times in Manitoba are in the urgent-care room in the Misericordia Health Centre.

This week is International Nursing Week, and I can tell the House that many nurses at the rally told me how proud and excited they were to be working at the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre.

Each year, more than 11,000 people from the core area of Winnipeg use the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, and yet the minister has decided to close it and abandon people in Winnipeg's core.

I ask one more time: Is the minister absolutely sure that closing the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre is his final answer?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I hope that that is his final question, because I'm going to say to him one more time: what was not acceptable is that Winnipeggers, and people who are coming from other parts of Manitoba sometimes, were sitting in emergency rooms for six, seven, eight, nine, 10 hours, Madam Speaker, waiting for care. That is why I assume the former NDP government, the Selinger government, commissioned the Peachey report, handpicked Dr. Peachey to do the report. I'm assuming that's why they did it, to try to get better care.

We're going to get better care where they never could achieve it, Madam Speaker.

Investment in Mining Sector Government Initiatives

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Madam Speaker, my background is in mining, and we've been hearing some good news about Manitoba's mining sector. Manitoba was recently ranked the second most attractive jurisdiction for mining investment in the world.

These types of investments provide great economic opportunity and job growth for Manitobans, particularly in the North, where I'm from.

Could the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade, please explain to the House how our government's efforts towards the mining sector are generating good jobs for Manitobans?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the question from the member of Thompson. He obviously understands the importance of mining in Manitoba.

Even though we went from 19th place to second place, we recognize there's more work to do to create an environment for investment here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, this government will develop a positive and effective consultation process. We will provide certainty around land use and we will also ensure that we have an effective internal process to deal with permits and work orders, and we will work with industry to reduce red tape.

Madam Speaker, this work will result in greater investments and benefits for all Manitobans.

Manitoba Hydro Affordability Promotion

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The Minister of—for Crown Services can't seem to see any opportunities for Hydro, but the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade was trying to sell power to our western provinces.

* (14:30)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Marcelino: I ask the minister—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marcelino: —for Crown Services: Will he listen to his colleague and get on board in promoting Manitoba's energy advantage?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): I do want to talk about the NDP bipole-Keeyask levy, which, Madam Speaker, is an NDP levy of disrespect.

For instance, the Keeyask dam was sent to the Public Utilities Board after the construction had started. That's disrespect. The bipole line was disallowed to go in front of the PUB. That's disrespect.

And, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this disrespect will cost Manitoba ratepayers for generations.

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

Power Sale to Saskatchewan

Mr. Marcelino: I had a very simple question. I didn't get an answer again.

So I ask the Minister for Growth, Enterprise and Trade: When he is working to sell more power to our neighbours in Saskatchewan, how might he transmit the power, on the east side of Lake Winnipeg or from the west side?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Schuler: The NDP bipole-Keeyask levy is all about NDP disrespect. In fact, the bipole Hydro fiasco, according to the NDP, was supposed to pay for itself. The NDP felt it was supposed to be cheaper than free.

Now, Madam Speaker, we find out it's at over \$4 billion. The NDP cost overrun is a clear disrespect to Manitoba Hydro ratepayers, and this will cost Manitoba ratepayers for generations.

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

Minister's Comments

Mr. Marcelino: I promise this is the final question.

Will the Crown Services Minister please withdraw his claim that Manitoba Hydro is bankrupt?

Mr. Schuler: Madam Speaker, I would like to read from a document, and then I will table it, and it's about the bipole line put out by the NDP, and I'd like to quote from it directly: Hugh McFadyen knows the bipole will not cost taxpayers a single cent. It is paid for by international hydro sales. McFadyen is making numbers up.

And today we found out that the hydro line, the bipole line, is going to cost more than \$4 billion, Madam Speaker. And it's going to be ratepayers for generations who are going to pay for this mistake.

Air Canada Centre for Excellence Employment Creation Inquiry

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Last July, the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade claimed with great fanfare that he had held Air Canada to account and stood up for aerospace workers.

The minister claimed that Air Canada was going to create a centre of excellence and it was going to create 150 jobs here in Winnipeg.

Can the minister update the House: How many jobs are there right now?

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

We certainly recognize that aerospace is an important industry for us in Manitoba. Certainly discussions with Air Canada are ongoing. We

certainly believe there is room for expansion in the aerospace business here in Manitoba. We've seen some new jobs created in that sector and we're looking forward, actually, to having more jobs created in that sector.

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

Mr. Allum: Well, that's a tricky proposition, Madam Speaker. He's going to create more jobs, yet there appear to be no jobs at this particular place.

He said—the minister claimed at the time that 150 jobs would be created with an additional 250 jobs in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —waiting. The minister turned himself into a pretzel, patting himself on the back over this announcement.

If things were going so well, why doesn't he tell us how many jobs are there right now?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, I will guarantee there's more jobs out there now than there was when the NDP left office.

Madam Speaker, we have a really important industry here. In fact, there's a very important research component to the operations in the aerospace industry. In fact, I just toured a facility that was undergoing a \$25-million expansion that's due to be open this fall. That will create more jobs.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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

Mr. Allum: The minister is supposed to be doing a job here. He's supposed to be holding Air Canada to account after the government dropped its lawsuit against the airline.

The—Air Canada made a commitment to create a centre of excellence here. It made a commitment to create upwards of 400 jobs here. To date, there are no jobs.

So why doesn't the minister get on the phone and call Air Canada. Or, conversely—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —conversely, Madam Speaker, he could get the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to pick up his phone but he—apparently, he doesn't have one.

Mr. Cullen: We're committed to creating jobs, Madam Speaker. In fact, I could fly down to Toronto and see the CEO of Air Canada, stay there for a week, and spend less than members opposite are submitting in phone bills.

Wastewater Upgrades New Funding for Projects

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to see the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations announce the funding of several water and wastewater infrastructure projects recently, particularly the 6th Avenue Wastewater Pump Station upgrade project in my constituency. I know the Town of Swan River has been keen to see the project funded.

Can the minister tell us about the projects funded, and what it'll mean to the communities getting the funding?

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank the member for that great question. Our \$1.7-billion infrastructure plan is amongst the highest total infrastructure expenditures in Manitoba history. It's another reason why our budget is such great news for all municipalities.

This is just one out of 24 water and wastewater projects that will soon begin, representing over \$38 million in new capital spending. Building on these investments, Budget 2017 adds an additional \$2 million to the budget for Manitoba Water Services Board projects.

Madam Speaker, these important investments will help foster sustainable economic growth and safe, healthy communities for Manitobans to live and work. Thank you.

* (14:40)

Nursing Profession Employment Concerns

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): May 8th to 14th is National Nursing Week. It's a week dedicated to thanking nurses for their compassion, hard work and dedication to patient care. It is well deserved.

What is not deserved is this government's continuance to practise and their unsureness in job security

Would the government answer the calls of the nurses here in Manitoba and give them assurance regarding their futures in health care?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, of course nurses are an integral part of the health-care system, along with many other health-care professionals. We value the work that they do each and every day on the front lines in our health-care system. We know that they're giving a quality service and care at the bedside and other places for many Manitobans. Of course we value the work that nurses do each and every day.

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

Changes to Health-Care Services Timeline for Implementation

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Madam Speaker, this government has yet to provide a detailed plan or a timeline of these drastic health-care changes.

Would the minister please share with the House what Manitobans should be expecting next with respect to closing down the three ERs?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, Manitobans should be expecting results and we're going to provide them results.

We've indicated that waiting six, seven, eight, 10 hours in an emergency room, as happened for the previous 17 years under the NDP government, simply wasn't acceptable. That is why we're taking action on the Peachey report which was commissioned by the NDP.

But if the member wants to help us she could dial up her friends in Ottawa, for less than \$5,000 she could even fly there and visit and try to get us real support from the federal Liberal government, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Kelvin High School Gymnasium and Wellness Centre

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

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

St. Boniface QuickCare Clinic

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Kelvin High School Gymnasium and Wellness Centre

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this position-petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the legislative of Manitoba as follows:

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

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

* (14:50)

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

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

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

taxi drivers through the installation of shields and cameras.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Grievances.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, this afternoon we would like to continue with Estimates.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:20)

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

The floor is now open for questions. The—Mr. Lindsey—the honourable—no, the member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It's been a couple of days since he's had to do it, so.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I welcome everybody back to the Executive Council Estimates process again, and—I guess I'll go out on a wing here and ask some labour-type questions of the Premier. And just—we know about vacancy management, and I asked in Agriculture very specifically, I looked at some numbers there. But could the Premier give us any indication of what kind of vacancy management is in place overall for government departments and whether he believes that number should go up or go down, or how he's managing that?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I thank the member for the question.

First of all, I'd be remiss if I didn't wish the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino)—Logan? Flor?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Pallister: —the best this Sunday. She's the only one on the committee here presently, apart from someone sitting on the side over there, the member for Riel (Ms. Squires), who will be acknowledged on Mother's Day, and I wanted to congratulate her on Mother's Day. And also I know it's a special day this year for her, especially, so I wanted to say that.

I would appreciate the question from the member in respect of the vacancy management issue. It's not possible with the dynamic nature of government, and all the different departments having very different demands put upon them, to have one policy for all. So the member's asking me, you know, should the numbers go up, should they go down. I think generally, though, it would be fair to say that we recognize that the level of government spending isn't sustainable because we're—you know, we're running up against billion dollars or close on deficit. And so, given that three out of four dollars approximately is our—is payroll, we got to take a look at how we can consolidate and do things better within our government operations. So I would say, like most governments across Canada, very likely overall numbers aren't likely to go up. And it wouldn't be affordable or realistic to suggest that would be the case.

That being said, there are certain parts of the government operations where employment—service

demands are going to drive additional position needs, so there's no doubt that in some areas there's going to be, you know, an additional push on.

If I could, I wanted to—as I've been doing—when I take questions for notice, I like to get back an answer. And so the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) had asked me about the Building Manitoba Fund, and I just got the detail on that now. There's some reference on page 21 of the budget document to the—that answers, in part, I think, what the member was asking, and I'll just quote from that. Under the section, partnerships, much of our time during our first year in government been spent listening to our municipal partners. We're committed to supporting all municipalities, including Winnipeg, of course, through a simplified approach that provides more flexibility and autonomy for local decision making. That's this basket funding thing we've been talking about doing. And this is certainly come—regardless as in the North, south, didn't matter. When you're talking to the municipal people, they were saying, we'd like a little bit more latitude in terms of how we manage the resources that we get, and some simplification in terms of the paper processes.

So that's where this single-window model that we were talking about is going, the idea being to simplify those processes that are used that often, in the past, have been a source of concern for local governments.

* (15:30)

Also for third-party proponents, too, not just for governments, but for third parties, say, NGOs. Various non-profits have said they'd like a simpler model, something that they can fit into that's easier for them because a lot of them are scarce on resources too. As we all know, working with some of our community groups there's not often an abundance of resources, and if we can simplify processes and help them do the important work they do, that's good, too.

So, for example, when it comes to things like applying for cost-sharing or using strategic investment strategies within infrastructure, maximizing value from the taxpayers' investments that we're making on their behalf, this is really important. So that's—that's a kind of quick overview.

The funding in this budget delivers on that commitment, because what it does, it consolidates all the existing funding within the Building Manitoba

Fund and adds in other grants to it, but the line is essentially the same in terms of dollars. It's just that it's bundled under a single basket, and now we're working together with AMM and other organizations to make that system work better.

We know we've got challenging fiscal times. We know all governments are dealing with reduced revenue flows as economic growth tends to—well, it isn't at the levels it was in years past, and the members know that—but we continue to demonstrate a very significant commitment to local governments with our funding commitments.

Mr. Lindsey: Thank you for responding to my question and to the member from Logan's question, the interim leader's question.

Getting back to vacancy management for a minute, if we can, is it part of an overall strategy to see those numbers of vacancies perhaps go up as a way of limiting government expenditures without appearing to have gotten rid of anybody, just as people retire or quit, not to replace them, so that those numbers go down?

Mr. Pallister: I would say the demographic reality is what we're all facing, right? This is—there is a really good interesting article, if members didn't have a chance to see it, in Globe and Mail last week on—for the first time in a lot of jurisdictions the number of retirees passing basically everybody else in terms of our population.

So there's a demographic reality that's at work across most of the Western world, right, a little less so here in Manitoba, because we do have a bit younger population. We've got a lot of—the RM of Stanley, for example, you know that area around Winkler-Morden is the youngest local government in Canada, and it's because they've had significant immigration to that area and a lot of really large families have come in there. So they're actually not—they're not representative of the reality for the rest of the country, you know.

But the reality is for us the same as it is for every government workforce across the country. Our workforce is aging, so—seen different literature on this and it varies by department. But you may have 5, 6 per cent of people eligible to retire each year—*[interjection]*—yes, and even higher turnover because some do also elect to leave, pre-retire—you know, pre their max retirement. Some elect to retire for various reasons, perhaps because a spouse is

retired and they—they're wanting to join their spouse in their retirement time.

So this provides a renewal of sorts, but it provides a load of challenges, too, in terms of recruitment, in terms of motivation, right, in terms of wanting to effectively keep your civil service strong and excited about being there. It's like they—what's it called—the ancient curse, right, challenges and opportunities, they go together.

So, with us, as with every—really every jurisdiction in Canada, there is an opportunity and a challenge at the same time because you're losing some really good people that have been around that have great expertise and you need to get new people into the business of providing services to the public at the same time.

Mr. Lindsey: Certainly appreciate what the Premier's talking about with the challenge. I know from conversations I've had, for example, with the CEO of the Northern Health Region that there's a really big vacancy problem there already and attracting people is becoming more of a challenge.

So does the government have an overall strategy of how to attract new people or to retain existing people so this vacancy number doesn't become an actual deterrent for people staying so that their workloads would become too much, that more people are actually trying to get out. So do you have an overall strategy to address that?

Mr. Pallister: That's a really good—it's a tough topic because there's so many aspects to it, as the member knows, but it's a really important topic because you want to have a motivated workforce. And motivation is—it's tough to recruit and retain if the workload is too great. It's also tough to retain if the workload isn't great enough, if people don't feel challenged in their work, right, so it's a delicate balance. And it's not an easy thing to do. Private sector, public sector, it's a very, very challenging aspect of getting a successful organization going. I've had the chance to pick the brains of a few people who are real experts on this field when I was in Ottawa, involved with—in public service there, and with the federal civil service, of course, much, much larger, you know, so it's a monumental challenge there.

But here it's also a challenge because we have some really, really difficult social problems, for example. And that's a tough area for people to work in. And so I have a tremendous admiration for the people that work in caregiving professions, in the

social services, for example, because they are dealing with some really, really difficult situations, rough situations. And keeping enthused and positive and feeling good about your work is—can be very, very hard. Days can be uneven in that area of public service. And we need good people to help other people who need help.

And so in that area there's been some expansion, some recruitment. A lot of the new workforce in social services has been added in the last five or six years. There are a lot of—there—a lot more people with less years of service, which creates additional training opportunities and challenges, as well. And, for example, I'm told an—you know, someone who's experienced in social work can handle a bigger workload because of those years of experience they have. Someone just coming in may not be yet capable of doing that level of work, right. It's a delicate balancing act to not overwork the experienced one at the same time as you're putting pressure on the new person to get up the learning curve too fast. There's a delicate balancing act there.

Same is true in health care, where, in the caring professions of any kind, where there's an aging workforce in nursing and teaching, as well, and keeping those professions enjoyable, rewarding and also making sure the compensation, the benefits and so on are at a level where we can encourage people to come in and support themselves, support their families in those jobs, is a real important aspect of what we're—what we have to do.

I would also say, though, that it's important—and, I mean, people in the caring professions, for example, all know this too—it's important to have these services available on a sustainable basis going forward. And in—with many governments over the last number of years, the budgets have gone increasingly away from some of these departments and over to, say, health care. So the member would know, we looked at the pie chart, you know, from 10 years ago, virtually every jurisdiction health care was less as a percentage of provincial budgets than it is now. Part of that's the aging population.

This has meant there's less dollars available for other things, whether it would be, and I know the member's particular, as I am, particularly interested in worker safety. There's been less money available for important issues of investment in other files and a greater tendency to borrow more, lever more and, in Manitoba, run deficits—very, you know, very significant deficits the last few years.

But we have to sustain our social services going forward. And to do that, we can't continue down this path of running, you know, deficits that are getting larger and larger at a time when most experts are saying we're on the verge of having to absorb larger—like, higher interest rates would mean higher debt service costs. That's going to take millions, tens of millions, potentially hundreds of millions of dollars away from the very front-line services that we're—that we value most and we want to protect for Manitobans.

So it's not an easy thing, and I hope I've addressed some aspects of what the member's—I look forward to talking more with him about this issue, because I think it's really important for us to talk about.

* (15:40)

Mr. Lindsey: I'm not sure that you've really addressed the heart of the question yet. I mean, I recognize, as do you, that there's certainly challenges in how to manage that and—but I'm not sure that I've heard you say that either as a whole the government has a plan or by department they have a plan.

I just—focus on northern health, for just a moment, as an example. I know every time I talk to the CEO up there it's one of the big challenges they have is that they have a significant vacancy rate, which is really leading to a higher vacancy rate because the first opportunity a lot of people have in health care today to get out—I'm talking health-care aides and nurses—they take that opportunity then because the workload has grown substantially. They, particularly now, don't see their pay keeping pace with the cost of living in the North, for example, which then makes it harder again.

So is there very specific plans on how the government wants to or plans to address this— what I see at least as a growing vacancy rate which is just making the problem bigger and causing the problem to grow again.

Mr. Pallister: I agree with the member on that observation. It's a particular challenge in some areas of the province, not exclusively the North, but—for recruitment—get, you know, finding the right people. We can—we'll leave doctors aside for now, but that's a good example of one challenge. But there are others as well where you need a person or people with certain skill sets and not available and you've got to try to find those people and bring them in. It's tricky.

I think I can give some specifics to the member. The Civil Service Commission has a number of different programs that it uses to encourage development and recruitment within the civil service. We've got internship programs, for example, for folks with disabilities. That would be one example of a specific program, something that we're working—I know the previous administration endeavoured to as well—to do a better job of making sure that we have work opportunities, job opportunities for folks that have a disability of some kind. That's a really important part of, I think, what government can do. It's something the government can do to sort of set the example also for the private sector to follow.

Management internship programs for folks that are—that want to get involved in that stream of work, women's leadership programs, there's also a talent management program for senior leaders, as well—I'm touching on some. I've asked—I don't know if we'll have them today, but I've asked for some additional information so that if we can continue this discussion I'll have more detail for the member. But I'm just touching on some of the areas that—where there's some programs available. There's a common training unit in government called organizational and staff development that works around—that planning provides training, for example, for employees using new technologies.

Also, there's a number of traditional programs as well. One of the areas that's increasingly important—and I come from this background in the private sector—is succession training, succession planning, working—in my case, if I could, I'll just say over the years I developed my little business to become a little bit bigger, working especially on helping families that were in transition, right, so that if—let's use a farm machinery dealership or something as an example, right. And a couple's built it up over the years and they're looking for a son or daughter to continue in the business. The training demands on that. The estate planning around being fair to the other kids and all these types of things, this is a really interesting and intimate kind of work and I enjoyed that work. You really get to know the family and you get to know what their priorities are. You get to know the history of how they built up their little business, whatever it is, right, and help them to get through the hiccups of this difficult time, because retirement can be one of the most stressful times for all of us, actually. They say it's one of the highest stress times, apart from losing a child, losing a

spouse, retirement is one of the more stressful times for people in their lives.

And so succession planning in the workplace is what the member, I think, in a sense, is raising too, right, because you've got a lot of people approaching retirement. How do you—if he and I and a few of our colleagues are working in the unit and providing a service, whatever that service is, and then we decide to leave, if we were the team leaders, you know, who's replacing us? And building a system where people can come in, take over those responsibilities and it can be as smooth as possible is a real challenge.

So these are some of the programs that the government is operating to deal with a lot of these issues, and they're particularly important, as I said earlier, when you've got such a high percentage of these baby boomers coming through the system that are approaching retirement right now; it's particularly important.

I would also mention that there are initiatives the Civil Service Commission leads as well on respectful workplace and working to make sure that that is the thing. And I think, probably, those materials would be useful to distribute to MLAs for our conduct during question period as well—all of us, not just the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

Mr. Lindsey: I'm not sure that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) just took a shot at me or not, but I've been known to do that a time or two myself, so I'll roll with it.

Just before I leave this vacancy management line of questioning, I know that, right now, in the North, health care has become a fly-in, fly-out proposition. They don't attract people anymore. The doctors come for a week and then they leave. Nurses come for a week and they leave. We're down, now, to paramedics and ambulance drivers being fly-in and fly-out. Is that part of this government's overall strategy, is to have health care in the North like a mining camp where there's no permanency to any of them?

Mr. Pallister: No. And I really appreciate the member's comments on this, and I think the Health Minister can elaborate much better than I on the specifics, but I do know that the member's talking about a very serious concern.

One of the areas—and, of course, part of this, with indigenous communities, is a lack of—as we've talked about before, is a lack of investment by the

federal government in primary health care. And that has, frankly, has been a sore spot, and it isn't just the present Liberal government either. I've raised this with a government I was a part of.

This is an issue for the North; it's an issue for isolated communities that aren't that far north too, and it's a serious concern. When you need health care, you need health care. And if the more isolated your community, the harder that is to—the harder it becomes to attract people to come and live in your community, too, because if you don't have the services available, it becomes a difficult thing. Imagine a young family considering where to go and live, and they—you know, the health-care services in that community are really limited and you've got to fly out to get them and so on.

One of the things that I know the Health Minister and I have discussed—and I'm not sure where he's at on it right now; frankly, it would be better for him to address the detail—is looking at possible ways to get services—and this would not be limited to it, but one of the examples I talked about with other premiers is testing, diagnostic equipment and stuff. Instead of having 20 people have to fly out of some community, go down to Winnipeg to get a test done of some kind, why not have the machine and an operator getting up to the community? Save a lot of time.

Now, it doesn't mean you have the—you don't need to have the permanent installation, necessarily, but if you could make mobile some of those testing apparatus so people don't have to travel two days, three, four days, sometimes, to get to where they need to do the tests, it would be easier for people who are generally not doing those tests for fun, right; they're doing them because they're not feeling very well—saves them a lot of trouble.

So it's one of the areas we've talked about generally. And I know from talking to some of the other premiers, there are some pilots and there have been some initiatives done in—elsewhere in Canada, and it's something that is very much of interest to me.

I'd be interested in the member's ideas on that, too, because I think if we can start to move more of those services to the community rather than force every community member to have to come on a bus or a plane to come down for a test, it's a start.

It's not the only answer; I know that, but it's a starting point to maybe assist better in making some level of diagnostic care, primary care, available that

hasn't been available in a lot of communities for a long time, if ever.

*(15:50)

Mr. Lindsey: Before I turn the floor over to the member for Minto, I just want to comment on the Premier's last response, and I'm glad to see he's come around to my way of thinking. I've been pushing for an MRI, for example, in my hometown of Flin Flon since before I was elected. There's a lot of information out there about portable MRIs. BC has had quite a bit of success with them in some of their more remote communities. Certainly, all over in the States there's a history of success with them. So I'm all in favour of having more diagnostic equipment in the North because, yes, absolutely, it will reduce the cost for northern patient transfer exponentially. But a closing comment is then we need to have a way to move people between those communities and that's not in place right now.

With that, I'll turn the floor over to the member for Minto.

Mr. Pallister: I just—I want to never, never take away the credit the member deserves for advocating for something I agree with. But I would want him to know that when he was in his teens I was advocating for this. So it isn't necessarily me coming around to his way of thinking, perhaps it's him coming around to my way of thinking. Either way a good idea is one we can share.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I just want to return to some of the questions that I asked the Premier (Mr. Pallister) on Monday and the Premier was going to go get some more advice on a few things.

Has the Premier now received advice as to whether he can disclose the manner of his communications while he's down in Costa Rica?

Mr. Pallister: I've been advised to continue using the same practices and protocols that were used by the previous government. And I want the member to be assured that I will look at every way of strengthening the security beyond what was available to the previous administration.

Mr. Swan: Well, I listened to the Premier being interviewed out in the hall after question period, and what I took from that is that this Premier wants to tell us that he doesn't use a government cellphone to conduct government business. He doesn't use a government email account to conduct government business when he's down in Costa Rica.

So is his answer, then, that any communication he has is outside of a government cellphone or a government email account?

Mr. Pallister: My answer is exactly the same as it was the other day. I'll continue to follow the protocols and practices that were used by the previous administration and look to improve them.

Mr. Swan: Well, I'm just having trouble understanding what the Premier is talking about. I was the Attorney General of Manitoba for five years and I had a government-issued cellphone which I used to conduct government business both in the province and outside of the province.

What protocols of the previous government is the Premier talking about?

Mr. Pallister: I'm referring to the non-disclosure of the specific aspects of how members of Cabinet communicate.

Mr. Swan: So, just so I'm clear on that, the Premier is not denying that formerly the premier and Cabinet ministers used government cellphones and government email accounts, that's not the kind of protocol the Premier is talking about?

Mr. Pallister: I'm not aware; if the member's aware he could put it on the record of any of his colleagues disclosing the nature—specific nature of their communications' techniques, apparatus, frequency or who they called. That's what I'm talking about. I'm not planning on disclosing those things because I don't believe that would be wise, and I take very seriously the responsibility in protecting the integrity and confidentiality of all information that I deal with.

Mr. Swan: So is it the Premier's position, then, that when he's down in Costa Rica, or I guess anywhere else in the world, any communications that he has or says he has with staff he believes it's appropriate that they be beyond the ability of a freedom of information request, which is the law, which can allow opposition members, can allow media members, that can allow average Manitobans to make questions and ask questions and obtain documentation of the activities of government?

Is the Premier saying that he's beyond that and doesn't have to follow that law?

Mr. Pallister: I'm saying I'm following the same practices and protocols as the previous government did and I'll continue to. But I will commit to the member to enhance them because I know that they aren't perfect. No security measures are necessarily

in this day and age, I suppose, perfect. And I have been researching and we are developing ways of making sure that our system protects the integrity and confidentiality of the information that we deal with because we take that very seriously.

Mr. Swan: Well, I also—I've heard what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has to say about security and—without naming names I know there's some very bright people in this room that advised me, as the Attorney General, on security and some of the threats that are out there.

Can the Premier put on the record how using an email account other than the government email account is actually more secure? Could the Premier explain that, please?

Mr. Pallister: I will explain that after the member explains how using government emails exclusively is more secure than using anything else, and if he can explain that, he'd be the only person in the world that can.

I would give this as evidence to him: We haven't had a leak. I hope we don't. We may, but in the meantime, I'll continue to use methods that protect the integrity and confidentiality of information just as the previous government attempted to do. And I will make sure that we pursue every avenue to add additional security and protection to that information.

If the member was to provide me with information about himself or his family in confidence, I would feel horrible if that information was to get out. I do not think that we should fail to protect the confidential nature of our information at all possible times.

Mr. Swan: Well, that is the most ridiculous explanation I have heard for this Premier. Deciding to put any communications, if indeed he does have communications with his staff, with his Cabinet ministers, with caucus, with other leaders of other governments, that is the most ridiculous explanation for not using any government email system or any system of government communication that can actually be accessed within a reasonable way under freedom of information.

The Premier well knows that a freedom-of-information request would protect any specific information, any information about who he was talking to or the nature of that communication, but it would at least allow us to have some kind of proof that when the Premier goes down to Costa Rica, he actually has any communication whatsoever

with his staff or anybody in government back in Manitoba.

So I thank the Premier for confirming he doesn't believe that he's bound by the freedom of information act and I guess we'll have to wait for the Ombudsman to determine whether those other records have to be disclosed, and then we'll have to have another series of questions then.

I don't understand why the Premier is being so secretive about this, why the Premier doesn't want to answer what are very simple questions, and I suppose the Premier's answer is that we'll just wait for the Ombudsman to come back with a ruling.

Mr. Pallister: Didn't hear a question.

Mr. Swan: Right. I just want to deal with the—just sort of another issue dealing with the night-lighting question that we discussed in some detail on Monday. I'm aware that there was a press conference last week by the president of the Manitoba Metis Federation, David Chartrand, as well as the grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Derek Nepinak. It deals with a situation where an individual or individuals were charged with a night hunting charge under The Wildlife Act. President Chartrand and Grand Chief Nepinak say that there were serious problems with the confession that was provided by these individuals, and the charges were then stayed.

Now, the Premier wasn't there and I wasn't there, so I don't expect the Premier to have any better knowledge about the situation than I do.

The question I have for the Premier is whether he's prepared to reach out and speak to President Chartrand and Grand Chief Nepinak to try to get to the bottom of a problem that apparently existed in this case.

Mr. Pallister: I reach out regularly to indigenous leaders across the province—spoke to David Chartrand just last week, and I'll continue to work together with him on all kinds of issues.

On the issues the member alluded to earlier, his concerns about FIPPA, he didn't have those concerns when he was in government. You know, for example, when I asked questions about the purchase of Tiger Dams, I got blacked out documents and was told I couldn't have access to those. When I asked questions and our members asked questions when in opposition about severance pay, we were told and all members of the media were told they couldn't have information on those because FIPPA excluded it.

When I was asked questions about briefings on increased sales tax, I hold in my hand a document which demonstrates that there's zero information available from the previous government—totally blacked out.

We've been releasing more information than the previous government by a considerable amount, and I agree that the member's bemusement may be well-founded in his previous behaviour as a minister and being part of a government that disrespected the desire that Manitobans had to get legitimate information on legitimate issues.

* (16:00)

However, it would be apparent and should be apparent to him as a man of some logic that it would serve my interests very easily to release to him the frequency of calls, the devices I used and in every respect hand them over to him. And so what is bemusing to me is his lack of ability to understand that my principal concern here is to protect the integrity of information which is confidential and should remain confidential. However, this is information in reference to the previous government which should have been made public.

So what he—I recognize that he is bemused and puzzled; that is not new to me. I've seen that before and I understand that, but I would say to him, in the interest of fairness, to recognize that, for example, when Christine Melnick and that incident came forward, the previous administration had the opportunity to release the information. They covered it up. They failed to release it. It was an act by a minister of the Crown at that time to involve civil servants in a partisan protest rally. They covered that up. Only a year later did the Ombudsman's report demonstrate that there was a clear knowledge by the premier of the day and by the member that she was actively engaged in the process of trying to encourage civil servants to organize a protest rally, yet we waited for a year for that to happen. We waited for a year for that to be disclosed.

Now, if the member wants to ask specific questions that I can answer without impugning the integrity of the system that protects the confidential nature of the information that I must deal with, and that all Cabinet members must deal with on a regular basis, I am happy to answer those questions and clearly, clearly I will, as I have. But when he asks me questions about the specific nature and frequency of calls made on various devices, he moves into an area which he himself would never have responded to,

nor did any member of his government in 17 years respond to, nor did they ever provide information on the nature of those protected discussions.

So I will not do what he did not do when he was in government. I will not venture into an area which exposes the possibilities of greater leakage of confidential information to the general public. I won't do that; the member didn't do it when he was in government. If he wants to give an example of doing so, I'm happy to listen to his example, but I seriously doubt that he did.

And I would go further in saying when I asked for information on the untendered purchase of Tiger Dams from the members then on the government side of the House, millions of dollars of Tiger Dams were purchased untendered. This was a violation of The Financial Administration Act. I got blacked-out documents—I hold in my hand blacked-out documents—not a shred of information in these documents.

So, when the member speaks about and attempts to portray himself as a, you know, a moralist in respect of his respect for public information and the public having knowledge, it's contradicted by the actions that he and his government undertook when they were in power for 17 years—blacked-out page after blacked-out page. Not one piece of information made available to the general public. You can go through the whole document. There's virtually nothing exposed there.

So, you know, again, what we're undertaking to do is change that and to make information more readily available to the general public. That's what we'll continue to do, but the fact remains that the member is asking me to do something which, when he was in government, he never did.

Mr. Swan: Well, I'm glad to see the Premier (Mr. Pallister) found his political note, because we always know that when he has absolutely no answer that makes any sense, we know that he lashes out; we know he strikes out and makes personal attacks. The Premier wants to talk about freedom of information, and I'm—we'll return to that.

Can the Premier then give us any good explanation as to when we obtained the information under the Freedom of Information Act, there has not been record of a single telephone call, nor record of a single email, from the time the Premier was down in Costa Rica, back to his political staff, back to his

Cabinet ministers, or back to anybody running the government here in Manitoba?

The Premier can talk about documents being blacked out. There are no documents because it's clear the Premier does not use any form of government communication when he's down in Costa Rica for reasons that have—that make absolutely no sense, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Pallister: There's no question there.

Mr. Swan: Maybe I can return to the question I'd asked before the Premier decided to keep driving down the road, looking in the rear-view mirror. I asked a specific question about a concern—a serious concern raised by President Chartrand and Grand Chief Nepinak.

Since that press conference was held, has the Premier reached out to either or both of these gentlemen to try to get to the bottom of the story and give them some satisfaction that this issue is being dealt with by the government?

Mr. Pallister: I continue to believe that night shooting is an abomination. And I'd like to read into the record how it works, because I don't think the members are aware, necessarily, the former Justice minister not having been part of a government that actually demonstrated any real concerns for the issue, actually letting the complaints of offences go on and on and accelerate over a long period of time without any result in action in terms of additional security, additional investment in conservation, not actually demonstrating they understood the degree of severity of the concerns that was being expressed. That, unfortunately—and I'm not blaming the member for this—but that has resulted in not one but two deaths in the last three years as a result of night hunting. I grant that the member is—I am not holding the member personally responsible for that, but I have to say that that lack of action is evident.

See, it's not—it's a dangerous practice and it is a dangerous practice and it's unfair to the animal. And indigenous elders, we've had two open meetings already with indigenous elders from around the province and many of them have expressed that this is not in the indigenous culture.

How does it work? Why do deer seem to freeze in headlights instead of running? Now, I am not a hunter and so—but I've talked to hunters about how this works, and so I did some research on it and this is what I found. Less a function of fear than bewilderment, simply put, deer freeze in headlights

because they can't see. The eyes of a deer and the eyes of people share a number of features, but they also have a few significant differences. The pupil, unlike human pupils which are round and when dilated do not span much of the eye, deer pupils are elliptical like a cat's eyes. And they can dilate and they cover the entire width of the orb. And that greater dilation allows a lot more light to get in and reach the retina and that improves vision for deer at dawn and at dusk when deer are most active. The lens of a deer's eye is larger than humans and this allows more light to penetrate to the retina. In addition, because people are most active during the day, our lenses are slightly yellow which filters out damaging ultraviolet rays. By contrast, since deer are active at night and have little danger of eye damage from ultraviolet light, their lenses are clear. This enables a deer to see a bit of the UV spectrum, ultimately giving it even better night vision. Essentially, a reflector at the back of the eye behind the retina, the tapetum lucidum, reflects light back again across the retina and that drastically increases the light exposure for a deer. Although not found in humans, it's a common bit of eye anatomy in the animal world. This reflective layer is found in dogs, cats, racoons, rodents, birds, even fish, and it's the cause of eye shine, or the reflective glowing often seen when a light hits an animal in the dark.

Now, this is what night shooting is about for those who go out and do it. They shine a light; they see a reflection of eyes, and then they shoot at it. And both deer and humans have two types of photoreceptors on the retina: rods and cones. The cones are activated by brighter light and are sensitive to colour as well as help with distance vision. People have three different types of cone cells each sensitive to a different colour light: red, blue and green. On the other hand, deer have only two types of cone cells: those that can see blue and yellow. As a result, deer see red and orange poorly and they also do not see detail or at distance as well as humans do. But deer have a much greater proportion of rod cells. Rods enable both humans and deer to distinguish between light and dark and to see in dim light and at night. Since deer have many more rods, they are better able to see in low light and thus they have far superior night vision.

* (16:10)

But, when you introduce a light to a deer, they freeze because it blinds them and, effectively, that's what night shooting is in the modern context. It's not—I'm not talking about treaty rights, hunting with

torches, traditional night harvesting. I am talking about illegal night hunting with a spotlight. This is a concern to our government. It's a concern to a great many of the indigenous elders we've consulted with, and it'll continue to be a concern and we will address it and make sure that we address it with the best interests not only of human beings, but with the fairness of, and best interests of, preserving our wildlife species as well in mind.

Mr. Swan: I know the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) having a bad day, but I wish he would try to at least stay within the framework of the question.

I put to him a serious issue which has been raised by MMF President David Chartrand and Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Derek Nepinak. They had a press conference last Thursday. I don't know any of the circumstances they raise in this issue, and I don't expect the Premier does either.

The question I asked is whether he's reached out to either or both of these two gentlemen; I'm presuming the answer is no.

The question to the Premier: Is he prepared to speak to these two gentlemen to discuss their concerns about the way this case was handled, a case which is now completed in court, and will he agree to work with them to try to move forward on this issue?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I appreciate the member raising this topic because both of these gentlemen have communicated to me they got no satisfaction from the previous NDP government at all. I've discussed this issue with both of them, and I expect to continue to discuss it with both of them.

We've had—done extensive discussion with indigenous elders. We are setting up workshops to continue that discussion. We're going to move forward in co-operative manner to work with indigenous people across Manitoba, which is something the previous administration failed to do repeatedly.

Not only did they fail completely to work with indigenous people, they failed to work with the AMM as well. Let me put on the record some of the resolutions that were brought forward.

Here's one from the AMM: "WHEREAS night lighting is a persistent and dangerous hunting practice, posing a danger to both residents and livestock"—where's the date on this? Is there a date?—"AND WHEREAS the Manitoba Hunting Guide

states, Rights based hunters 'may not discharge a rifle or shot gun at night where it is dangerous to do so'; AND WHEREAS the above statement indicates that Manitoba Conservation deems night lighting and the discharge of rifles and shotguns at night to be a safe practice in some unspecified areas of Manitoba; AND WHEREAS Manitoba Conservation has failed to define safe and unsafe night hunting areas of Manitoba; THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AMM lobby the Province of Manitoba to provide municipalities with maps that clearly define areas in which Manitoba Conservation deems night lighting to be a safe hunting practice."

That was a resolution from the AMM, followed up by additional correspondence—no action taken by the previous administration whatsoever.

The number of examples of charges being laid or follow-up by conservation officers is minimal. We have increased our investment and focus on enforcement. We are trying to make sure we protect Manitobans who choose to engage in legal night hunting and protect those who are in the areas where illegal night hunting is done. At the same time, we recognize—and I appreciate the member raising this topic because it allows me to highlight the total inaction of the previous administration.

Here is a letter from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. This is dated November 20th, 2015—I'm sorry, a resolution from the Rural Municipality of Brokenhead: After a presentation from Paul Millan of the Brokenhead River Game and Fish Association, council felt this was a very important issue that should be addressed. As you may well know, these resolutions will be presented to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities annual conference, and council will be present to support the passing to ban night-light hunting. We support the Manitoba Wildlife Federation and wish them the greatest success to banning spotlighting in Manitoba. That was signed by Brad Saluk, the reeve of the municipality of Brokenhead.

A resolution from the municipality of Clanwilliam—I'll read the rest of these into the record. Just to suffice though, let's be clear that over a number of years, not only did indigenous Manitobans, but non-indigenous Manitobans in positions of leadership in both communities—rural municipalities and indigenous communities, First Nations and Metis—communicate to the government in a variety of ways that they wanted this issue

addressed, and it was not addressed. We are addressing it.

Mr. Swan: Well, that's fine. I'll communicate to President Chartrand and Grand Chief Nepinak that the Premier's not interested in discussing this issue with them, but we'll certainly listen and see what we can do. We think this is a serious issue, and we hope there can be a resolution.

Can the Premier provide a current organizational chart for Executive Council?

Mr. Pallister: The member speaks about listening but refuses to do so. He says he'll communicate to two prominent indigenous leaders that I have no desire to communicate with them, and he'll be laughed at when he communicates that, given the fact that I've already had communication with them on this specific topic.

He says he's listening and yet I'm putting on the record here examples of local organizations elected who represent thousands and tens of thousands of concerned Manitobans, which the previous administration absolutely refused to listen to. The member claims to be listening, but he repeats falsehoods into the record.

The member needs to understand that there is no evidence, or he would put it on the record, of his government actually giving a darn about the people who have these concerns and have expressed them to him. He should now demonstrate he has that concern in some manner other than attacking us for going after solving a problem that he ignored, that he made worse by his ignoring of it.

Here's another resolution. This comes from the municipality of Clanwilliam and Erickson. It's dated October 28th, 2015 and I encourage the member to listen to this: Whereas the Manitoba Wildlife Federation has presented that nightlighting is a dangerous hunting practice, therefore, be it resolved that council for the municipality of Clanwilliam-Erickson support the Manitoba Wildlife Federation in lobbying the Manitoba Conservation to ban all nightlighting within the province of Manitoba.

That was carried. That was signed by their chief administrative officer, Quinn Stelmaschuk. Again, October 28th, 2015. This was then forwarded on to the Wildlife Federation as well.

The Rural Municipality of Cornwallis, Lee Robins, vice-president: Dear Mr.—this is addressed

to Lee Robins, who's the vice-president of Manitoba Wildlife Federation at time. And it says, Dr. Mr. Robins: The council of the Rural Municipality of Cornwallis passed a resolution at their regular meeting on June 16th, 2015, in support of your efforts to encourage the Province of Manitoba to make spotlighting an illegal activity for all hunters. Enclosed, please find a certified copy of this resolution. Donna Anderson, chief administrative officer.

Again, you know, the member needs to understand that—and I appreciate him expressing support for our initiative now at this late date, but he needs to understand that there is no record of his government actually ever listening to the people he is now claiming to represent, in fact, quite the opposite. There is, in the absence of any evidence of any initiative being undertaken, I would say that there is 'evidence'—evidence of ignoring the problem, evidence of lethargy, in fact.

Here's some information in terms of lamping with rifles. This came off a website. Lamping with rifles: a sport of shooting at night with the aid of a high-powered light. It's a great pest control method, it says, for both foxes and rabbits and can also be used to shoot hares. Although this page focuses on shooting rabbits, you won't go too far amiss following this advice for foxes, so let's get started. What you'll need: first things first, you need a gun. It's possible to lamp with a good air rifle, but this sport is mostly for those lucky people who own a .22 rifle. As long as the rifle has the range and the power to make the kill, it's more than good enough to use. But keep in mind, if you use a gun that makes almost any kind of sound, the chances are you'll scare off anything you don't shoot. Then, of course, you need a lamp. Now this is a tricky business because you'll need to be able to aim both the lamp and the gun at the same time—unless you have a friend along, that is. It's possible to buy many different lamps that attach to a rifle and for a fair price. The best place to ask is your local firearms shop. The lamp will have to have a good solid beam. You need to be able to see what you're shooting. Now, unfortunately, it wouldn't be wise to use anything under 50 watts. Look for lamps marked 1 million candle power.

You know, this is what some people call sport. We don't believe it's sport, we don't believe it's fair, we don't believe it's right. We think it's dangerous. I encourage the member to jump on board with our position as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey)

has with our positions on other issues. We appreciate that kind of support from him and would encourage him to adopt a supportive tone on this important issue.

Mr. Swan: I'll ask again: Can the Premier (Mr. Pallister) provide a current organizational chart of the Executive Council?

Mr. Pallister: I've previously, for the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino), supplied all the detail which she asked of me in respect of the number of political staff and positions and so on. I can also, if the member would like, or whether he'd like it or not, I can read into the record the—twice as many political staff that were employed by the previous government up to the moment of their abandonment by the people of Manitoba in last spring's election.

* (16:20)

I'll look forward to reading those positions all into the record as soon as I receive a copy, and I will remind the member that our commitment during the election and since has been to trim at the top of our organization. We have reduced the size of our payroll to the point where it is just over half the level of payroll of the previous administration. The number of positions is also approximately half, and as soon as my able assistants here are able to provide me with further detail I will be looking forward to reading that into the record.

But I would like to continue to educate the members of the committee on the issue of lamping with rifles so that they understand how it does work. Most professional—[interjection]—yes—Gord Mackintosh, I believe, is writing a book; the members will want to read that. Most professional rabbit exterminators will use a high-powered spotlight when they go lamping with rifles, meanwhile—or meaning they don't even have to leave their vehicle, just sit there and shoot—shoot animals like they were in a barrel. That's what it says, but for most of us we need to carefully search the field looking for that glint of ruby rabbit eye.

Once the light hits the rabbit, it'll freeze up, hence the term a rabbit in the headlights, or it'll bolt. So, if you have your lamp attached to your rifle, you have to aim it at the rabbit to, well, to aim at the rabbit. So, once you are sure of your target, you'll have to aim quickly and shoot right away. Once you've made your shot, your natural instinct might be to head over to your kill. If you do, there's a chance you'll spook off whatever else is in the area. The only

reason to go to a shot target is if it needs to be dispatched. It's cruel to leave an animal suffering and can even be illegal.

If you want more advice about killing rabbits try our additional section yadda, yadda, yadda, about dispatching rabbits.

Lamping is best in the darkest of nights. Cloudy nights are best, but trips when the moon is new are the next best thing. Never shoot at just eyes. Dogs, cats or even people can be confused if you only half look. If out with a group, always stick together. Shooting is a fairly dangerous sport during the day so all the same rules apply at night, but with extra care.

So that's just a little bit of an intro guide on how easy it is to kill things at night by shooting a high-powered rifle with high-powered lighting at the eyes. This is night hunting, night killing more—a more accurate term. I think hunting should be used exclusively for more sustainable practices that are safer and legally done.

We'll continue to address this issue. I'll continue to work and my colleagues will continue to work with community leaders from all parts of the province to make sure that we move forward and make progress in the interests of Manitoban safety where the previous administration did virtually nothing at all.

Mr. Swan: All right, so the first time probably in Manitoba history the sitting premier is refusing to provide a current organizational chart of the Executive Council. So we'll move on.

In the Premier's most recent conflict of interest form he discloses his interest in a company called Pallister Investments 22 Ltd. Can the Premier put on the record what this company does, and what it holds?

Mr. Pallister: Member's undertaken this line of questioning last year as well, and I'll encourage him to just simply read the record. If he'd like to go on to health care, education, infrastructure and social services, or any number of other issues that are pertinent to Manitobans and that they care deeply about, I'd encourage him to use the time for that purpose.

However, these are the—this is exactly the line of questioning he pursued last year getting into my personal assets which have been listed and are available to Manitobans and on record. He knows

that. I'm not sure why he continues to choose this line of questioning. He is capable of so much more.

But, you know, I just simply invite him to do that while I continue to read into the record, because he has asserted that we—that this government does not care about addressing issues of concern to indigenous elders and indigenous leaders I must continue—and community leaders. *[interjection]* I will continue to put on record the antithesis of that with actual data and evidence.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Swan, on a point of order. *[interjection]* Oh, sorry, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

Mr. Swan: Mr. Chair, during Estimates, he's given wide latitude to answer questions. What the Premier is now going on to has nothing to do with the question that's been asked, nor the question previous to that, nor the question previous to that. I would ask the Chairperson to call the Premier to order and direct the Premier to make his comments at least somewhat related to the question that's been asked by a member of the opposition in the Estimates process.

Mr. Chairperson: Would the First Minister care to speak on the point of order?

Mr. Pallister: No.

Mr. Chairperson: What I hear, the Chair has no power over the quality of the question or the quality of the answer. Therefore, I am ruling that there is no point of order.

* * *

Mr. Swan: Well, I know the Premier is having an extremely bad day and is very angry and doesn't understand why I would ask the question.

I have in front of me sort of an excerpt from his conflict of interest declaration from November 24, 2016, and his last declaration which was in November 2015. Pallister Investments 22 Ltd. does not appear in his 2015 declaration, so I'm asking him, first of all, what this new corporation, which now suddenly appears in 2016, does and what property it holds. This is something new that's been disclosed by the Premier; it's not unreasonable to ask what shares, what business interests this Premier has.

Mr. Pallister: Asked and answered.

Mr. Swan: Well, the Premier now lists Pallister Investments 22 Ltd. He didn't the previous year, so I presume that then this is a new company the Premier

has set up some time between November 2015 and November 2016. Can the Premier then confirm that for the record?

Mr. Pallister: The member has asked me to disclose what has been disclosed, and the document he is citing discloses it, so it's been asked and answered.

Mr. Swan: So, if I was to go back and check with the corporations branch on the date that you signed your declaration, November 2015, and I was to check with the companies branch, there would be no company called Pallister Investments 22 Ltd. in existence at that time. Can the Premier confirm that?

Mr. Pallister: I'll confirm nothing of the kind. The member has a document in front of him. He can cite it until the cows come home.

He used this same line of questioning last year. I tried to answer all his questions. Every time I did, he went on to something else which was along the lines of my personal assets which are disclosed, and he's reading from the document wherein they are disclosed. So he can continue to read the document into the record, and I appreciate him doing it.

Mr. Swan: Well, the Premier has a very, very bizarre view of conflict of interest legislation in this province, and what he—I know he's very angry this afternoon. I would ask him to take a deep breath and to listen.

There is the declaration that he's made that there's a company, Pallister Investments 22 Ltd. that existed in his declaration, November 2016. That is something new; that did not exist in his declaration which he made the year before in November 2015. The Premier won't answer whether that's a new company, or whether it was incorporated in that year.

And I'm asking a very simple question: Is it the case then that when he filed his declaration, November 2015, he had no interest in Pallister Investments 22 Ltd. at that time? It's a very important question actually.

Mr. Pallister: I'm pleased that the member is—feels that his questions are important. I'm also pleased that he feels he is capable of observing my state of mind. I'm observing his and I'm observing it very well. The member is trying to put the same line of questioning he did last year using the same accusations. He has the documents in front of him. They are completed documents and he can cite them as he has three times already until—well, until 5 o'clock when this session will end, if he wishes.

Mr. Swan: Okay, so let's talk then about Pallister Investments 22 Ltd. which has magically appeared in the past year. What is the Premier's interest in this company?

Mr. Pallister: Member is entitled to ask me any question he wants. If he wants an answer, he can ask me questions that are in the public interest, pertain to the public interest, and I will most readily answer those questions.

Mr. Swan: So, just for the record, if I ask the Premier then what his—the nature of his interest is in a particular company which he discloses, which maybe he hasn't disclosed in other years—just putting on the record, the Premier says that that is not a matter of public interest and it's not an appropriate question for a member of the opposition.

And I'm sorry that the Premier, who believes he is the sole arbiter of openness and transparency, has so much difficulty answering simple questions.

How long has this company been in existence then?

Mr. Pallister: All members are required to file the documents which I filed and the member quotes from. I have filed them; the member quotes from them.

Mr. Swan: Very good. And what property then does this company hold? Is it a holding company or is it an active business?

* (16:30)

Mr. Pallister: Frankly, that's none of your business. The document's been filed. As all members must file their documents. I have filed the document fully. I have included the information that was asked of me. I will continue to do so, and in fact, we are looking at ways of making the process work even better.

Mr. Chairperson: I would just like to warn both the members here that some of the comments are getting a little bit too personal. I'd just like them to start looking at what they're saying.

Mr. Swan: Yes, I'd like to ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister) if he receives any compensation or benefit from Pallister Investments 22 Ltd.

Mr. Pallister: I'm not sure, I'm going to have to ask the clerk if that's any of the member's business too. I'm not entirely sure that it is. And I'll need to get advice from the acting clerk to find out if that is any of the member's business at all. I'm not sure that that's a requirement on the disclosure document that

all members must file. And I wouldn't want to establish a precedent which would then be forced to be followed by every other member on all sides of the House.

If there is disclosure required, I have disclosed. If there is not disclosure required, I'm not entirely sure of the wisdom of setting a precedent whereby people can—look, I don't mind if the member uses a microscope, but using a proctoscope is not a great idea.

Mr. Swan: Well, I've been using the Premier's conflict of interest documents, and I'm sorry this seems to have him extremely upset this afternoon.

Who controls this company?

Mr. Pallister: I'm not all upset. I'm totally accepting of the member's inquisition. I'm not sure the relevance of it. I'm not sure of how it benefits the public interest for him to ask personal details of my financial background beyond what is required in the disclosure forms that all members must fill out.

I also would question the wisdom of trying to, on the spot, jump into a position which he appears to have done to assume that he has the right to go beyond the disclosure requirements which all members must meet. I'm not entirely sure that that is fair or right. And so I'll find out from my clerk who is going to be researching this to make sure that I don't set a precedent which then all other members would be held to and my colleagues in other Estimates rooms would be held to if I begin to disclose personal information which pertains and which may impact on other people besides myself.

The member, I would hope would understand that. He was a legal counsel and he would understand that there would be potentially other people impacted, not just myself, in terms of disclosure. And that's—I think that's not an unreasonable thing to ask his understanding of. I'll get the advice from the clerk.

He can continue the line of questioning, and I assure him that if the advice I receive from the clerk is that I should answer the questions he is posing today, I have, in every undertaking from members opposite, I have provided the information after they have asked it on every single case. And I have every intention, if the advice I receive is to disclose the information to the member from senior, independent, non-partisan civil servants, I will disclose it.

But I will not do so today in the absence of such advice. And I would hope the member, as a former professional adviser himself, would respect that that makes good sense.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): It's our understanding that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has yet to table an org chart from Executive Council. So, if he would agree to do that, that would be great—as well as a list of all political and non-political staff. We do understand that he did read some information into the record the other day. Fair enough, but we're just asking for that basic information if he wouldn't mind.

I want to turn to a discussion of the—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Pallister: I appreciate the civil way in which the member asked the question. We'll undertake to provide that information. It was a nice contrast to the previous line of questioning from the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), and I will undertake to provide him with that once we can pull it together. And so he will get that at our next—I can't say that we'll have it today, but at our next opportunity he will get that org chart.

And just to be clear what he's asking, he's asking all political staff, senior staff exclusively, or both, or—because I did provide the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) with a complete list. *[interjection]* Yes, well, no, I didn't provide names, I provided positions and salaries. Is that what the member is asking?

I just want to be clear so I provide him with the information he wants.

Mr. Allum: We were looking for the org chart, to begin with, and then, yes, the list of both political and non-political staff in the Executive Council.

Mr. Pallister: I'd just ask the member for a little bit of guidance and maybe he can make this job a little bit easier, so we can do it faster, because he's asking for political and non-political staff, and non-political staff could include the entire civil service of the province of Manitoba. I think—I'm hoping what he wants is sort of the special assistants, the executive assistants, the normal sort of realm, what we call the political staff itself, but not the non-political staff—just for clarity.

Mr. Allum: Yes, so the question is twofold: (1) we're requesting the organizational chart for Executive Council, and then we're also looking for a

listing of staff members associated with Executive Council, employed by Executive Council.

Mr. Pallister: I thank the member very much for the clarification and absolutely we can provide him with that information. So he's looking for the organizational chart for Executive Council and the positions therein. Excellent. Thank you.

Mr. Allum: Well, I think the Premier can appreciate I'm nothing if not civil at all times, so I appreciate that.

I want to turn to a discussion, if we could this afternoon, for what remains of this afternoon, on Public Utilities Board.

Can the Premier please indicate for us who sits on the PUB at present?

Mr. Pallister: We're just under—I hope I can get that list to the member in short order and—but I will say in advance I don't claim a great depth of knowledge about the history of the Public Utilities Board. The member probably has more knowledge of it than I, so I would encourage him in advance, because I don't want to fail him in responding to questions that—those are—those would be good questions direct to my colleague who is in charge of that, which will be, in this case, the Finance Minister.

Mr. Allum: Well, thank you, and we certainly will be taking this up with the Finance Minister as well, so it's—this is, from the Premier's point of view, that we're asking these questions today and we'd appreciate the list of who presently sits on PUB.

Could you tell us, if you would, how did government, how did the Premier decide on the individuals that are on PUB?

Mr. Pallister: I don't have the—I appreciate the question. I don't have the document with me.

We endeavoured to follow the Auditor General's recommendations, which perhaps we can obtain, in terms of how we went about—and this was, I understand, a fair bit of work by the former—I think it was the former Auditor General—in terms of the processes to use to make sure that we did a good job of finding people initially and then of choosing among them to serve. And so we followed that Auditor General's report and those recommendations as best we could with each of our boards.

Mr. Allum: Okay, and I appreciate that answer. My understanding is the Premier has committed to providing some background there that sort of

connects Auditor General's recommended process for selection to the PUB and those individuals who were selected to sit on PUB. That would be fair.

Mr. Pallister: Yes. I'd be happy to undertake that for the member. I know this was an important challenge for the previous administration as well. You want to have the best people possible in these roles. It's an important responsibility and you want to have good people there and I think the previous administration had good people there.

Mr. Allum: I thank you for that.

This is not related to the line of questioning, but I have to say that when you use the term previous administration, that strikes me as a very American term to describe a parliamentary system of democracy. And when you—when the Premier does this, and he does it routinely, I find it not consistent with the parliamentary form of government that we have in Canada. So I just—just to remind him of—not to use—try not to use American terms to describe a Canadian system of government.

Could the Premier provide us with his—some insight into how he understands the mandate of PUB?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I will endeavour to get something written that I can give the member in more detail, I think, rather than ad libbing it. I'd like to, you know, I understand, I've read through the materials, but to try to recount it, I think it would be better to just to give him a more fulsome explanation to the question that he asks.

* (16:40)

Mr. Allum: Well, that would be appreciated and that's fine. I think, though, as the First Minister of the province, it would be useful at least to articulate for members of the committee just, generally speaking, at 50,000 feet, if he likes—level, if he could just give us his impression of what he understands the mandate of the PUB to be.

Mr. Pallister: Sure. At 50,000—I guess I'm equipped to physically, to start higher. I'll say I believe the Public Utilities Board exists to protect the best interests of Manitoba ratepayers and Manitobans, generally, as well. The—that work is important when it comes to evaluating things like hydro-rate applications or applications for increases in charges for auto insurance and the like.

I know that there have been times when we on the political side have disagreed with the

recommendations and the conclusions that emanate from either our Crowns or the results that are given to us by the Public Utilities Board. I remember Gary Doer expressing great concerns about some of the rulings in years gone by.

That being said, this is one of those delicate areas where there needs to be some sense of arm's-length decision-making. That's—that is what we're endeavouring to do, not to fail to provide respect for the quasi-independent nature of the Public Utilities Board and other agencies. And boards—as well, of our Crown corps, a delicate issue because it leaves governments prone to being associated with a lack of direct control in an area where they shouldn't have direct control.

And so the member recalls the accusations of unfairness when Manitoba Hydro was instructed by the minister of Hydro to locate the bipole line on the east side of the lake and how this was reacted to by many as a step too far in the direction of trying to influence the operations of a Crown corporation and was taken by some as disrespectful. In particular, I recall a number of former Hydro senior executives took exception to those—that direction being given by the government.

So it's a delicate issue, and I know that the member understands that. What we're endeavouring to do is to make sure that we demonstrate that respect for those boards, those agencies, that are charged with those responsibilities, whether it's operating a Crown corporation or it's adjudicating on a rate application. It's not an—always a relationship that is agree with us. Like our relationship, you know, it can be very good on 90 per cent of things, but then we—there may be 10 per cent of things that we have some fundamental disagreements on, and that tends to be the nature of relationships with thinking human beings a lot of the time.

Mr. Allum: Well, that's a generous estimate of a 90-10 split, but I'll concede to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) that, hopefully, we both have the best interests and all members have the best interests of Manitobans at heart when they're making political decisions.

The reason that we're—I'm asking about the mandate of the PUB is that the Premier knows that his government has tabled legislation—the Crown governance act, that updated the powers of the PUB.

So I'm wondering if he could provide us with an explanation as to why the government felt the need

to update the powers of the PUB, and why the updated powers that exist under the Crown service—or, Crown governance act did—why did the government feel that those updated powers were necessary.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member is, of course, aware of well—pretty well-publicized concerns that had been expressed by Manitoba Hydro president and by board chair as to the capital—the debt-to-equity ratios and various other aspects of Manitoba Hydro. And so there had been commentary—and I think it was public as well, not just from those two agencies, you know, the—not just from the board and the management of Hydro, but also from those who observe the PUB that—and in past too. The PUB had asked, when the previous administration was in charge, had asked—had at that time also—members of the PUB, or the chair of the PUB, had asked for the ability to have additional information to be able to do analysis in terms of—a fuller analysis in terms of rate application increases. I don't recall specifically—it was—the member may know if it was MPI or Hydro at that time, but there was a desire to understand more broadly the financial picture before making the—to better facilitate the adjudication process of determining the degree of credibility, I suppose, of the arguments that were being made about having higher rates. And so because of that—I do have the information, too, but I'll—and probably near the end of my time—but I do have the information the member had asked on—members of the public—oh, I've got a bit of time, okay.

Robert Gabor left the practice of law after 36 years—accepted the position as chair of Public Utilities Board. His practice covered the areas of administrative law to corporate, commercial and technology law, including intellectual property, cybersecurity and privacy law. During his tenure, he was one of the founders and general counsel to the Winnipeg Airports Authority and the Manitoba Technology Accelerator. He taught different courses at—for the Manitoba Bar admission course, including as a lecturer and examiner in ethics for over 15 years. He sat on numerous committees of the Law Society of Manitoba, including the discipline committee, as well as on the board of many not-for-profit organizations. Currently sits on the International Board of Governors of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the boards of directors of the Canadian friends of Hebrew University. He was appointed as a commissioner on the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform from 1990 to '92,

and he received the Queen diamonds—the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for community services in 2012. That's the chair.

Karen Botting, B.A., B.Ed, M.Ed., vice-chair, was appointed July 2012. Karen is the former director—the member would know Ms. Botting, I expect, because she served in this role. I won't read the bio into the record unless the member wants me to.

Hugh Grant—not the actor—Ph.D. The member knows as well, appointed in December of '13. And, of course, this is true of many of our—many of the boards: we have not replaced everyone willy-nilly. What we have tried to do is keep the continuity. This is a succession planning technique, I guess—tried to keep people on so that you got that continuity. This is also one of the things that the, I believe, the Auditor General recommended. It is kind of common sense.

Carol Hainsworth is a new member, CBA, appointed last year. She recently retired from her position as the regional financial officer, administrator and a member of the senior management team for Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, central region, serving in that capacity since 1999. She served previously as a branch account for the Victorian Order of Nurses, Winnipeg Branch. She is a shareholder and director of ACG Investments Ltd., which owns and operates Wildwood Park tourist resort. She's a community volunteer and a member of the Lakeside Lions Club.

Marilyn Kapitany, the member knows well.

Shawn McCutcheon is a new appointee. Shawn has owned and operated a commercial grain and special crops farm in the RM of Dufferin since 1975. He served seven years as a trustee of the former Midland School Division; six of those years as chairperson. He also served eight years as the reeve of the RM of Dufferin. He has been involved in numerous local and provincial organizations, and currently sits on the Carman Community Health Centre board and the Boyne Care development board. Boyne Care is tasked with renewing senior care in Carman and surrounding communities with an emphasis on getting new personal-care beds. He also received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for community services, in 2012. And I know his reputation as a heck of a good competitive curler, by the way—not that that necessarily would help him in this role, though, you know, some of these skills are transferrable.

I'm almost out of time, so I will wait. And there are a couple of other members I know the member would want to know more about here that have been appointed.

* (16:50)

Mr. Allum: Well, I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for providing us with that list. I'm assuming that he'll table that list just—that he's reading from today so that we can have it as well. That would be very useful.

I want to return, though, to the Crown governance act that we were talking about, because, I think, there's some confusion in the Premier's mind here. There's the—government tabled legislation called the Crown governance act that updated the powers of PUB, and then the government also passed an order-in-council in relation to the PUB, and before we get to the order-in-council, which is what he was describing earlier, I'm wondering if he could just help us to understand why—what powers were updated in the Crown governance act and why the government felt that was necessary. This is not in relation to the order-in-council. We'll get to that in a moment.

Mr. Pallister: Okay, I'll—maybe I'll just finish and run through the names of the new appointees first, because I did undertake to do so.

Sharon McKay was appointed last September; lives in Thompson, Manitoba; has spent much of her adult life as a leader in Manitoba Aboriginal organizations; has held a number of positions with the Keewatin Tribal Council, starting as an educational counsellor, moving to chief executive officer. She has also sat on a number of agencies, boards and commissions, including as member of the Manitoba Tribal Directors; past chairperson of Broadband Communications North Incorporated, which I know the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) would be interested in. That's—she was concerned there with telecommunications which she is engaging in right now for northern and remote communities. She is currently the executive director of the Aboriginal Knowledge and Cultural Division of University College of the North.

In addition, Susan Nemeč. I hope I'm pronouncing Susan's name properly. She was appointed in July of last year. Susan is the president of A&F Nemeč Recruitment. Prior to moving full time into the recruitment and placement of finance and accounting professionals, Susan held senior positions such as VP finance and systems of the

Moffat Canadian Cable group, corporate controller of the City of Winnipeg and many years as a senior insurance manager with a big four public accounting firm. Susan has held various volunteer positions, including president of Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame, president of the Winnipeg chapter of Financial Executives International, national board member and audit committee treasurer of the Winnipeg Convention Centre and the Manitoba Research Council. She currently sits on the audit committee of HEB Manitoba—I'm sorry, I don't know what that acronym stands for, maybe the member does. In 2010, she was awarded her FCA fellowship designation which recognizes distinction in her career and ongoing service to the CPA/CA profession and community.

I neglected to mention a couple of other members that were retained as well.

Al Morin—I think the member is—knows is—has been on the board since December of '13.

Anita Neville, of course the member knows, who was appointed back in July of 2012.

Larry Ring is a lawyer, a University of Manitoba graduate. He was appointed last year. Larry practised law in Winnipeg, appeared in both the civil and criminal courts. Larry was a partner of a law firm then known as Pollock Nurgitz Bromley Myers and Hewak. In 1977, he was appointed a provincial judge, and in 1987, he was appointed Master and Registrar in Bankruptcy of the Court of Queen's Bench and has now retired.

And, finally, three more quick ones, if I can do it.

Rhéal Teffaine is also a lawyer. He was appointed September of last year. Rhéal is a distinguished Manitoba lawyer, has practised law for more than 50 years. He is active within a variety of community cultural groups and charitable organizations, including le Centre culturel franco-manitobain, le Cercle Molière, St. Boniface General Hospital and Research Foundation, the Manitoba Health Services Commission, the National Theatre School of Canada and the Manitoba centennial corporation. He's also a long-standing member of many legal organizations, served as the president of the Manitoba Bar Association in 1988, and he's also been a commentator on radio and television for Radio-Canada.

Robert Vandewater has worked in the investment industry for 52 years. He was appointed

just last month. Recently retired as vice president and member of the senate for CIBC Wood Gundy. He has served in executive capacities as chair of the Manitoba and Saskatchewan districts of the Investment Dealers Association of Canada, and as chair of the Canadian Securities Institute. His experience extends beyond the investment industry, having served on a variety of boards across Canada. He served as audit committee chair for the Canadian Ports Corporation and The Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, St. John's Ambulance. Additionally, he is an active volunteer on the investment committees of a number of charities and not-for-profit corporations, including the Chartered Professional Accountants of Manitoba, has 15 years of military involvement and was an honorary colonel of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada.

It's a distinguished group and, you know, really, you can tell by those brief bios, the group of people that have demonstrated tremendous capability in their lives, a tremendous breadth of interests and, you know, a group that deserves to have their views respected and that's what we plan to do.

Mr. Allum: I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for that biographical information. As I said, I'm hopeful that since he read from it, he'd be pleased to table it for us, just so that we have the same information that he did.

However, I have—I've been trying to ask him about the Crown governance act and about the updated powers of the PUB, and then he brought into the discussion also the order-in-council that was passed regarding the PUB.

So maybe he could explain to us why there's a Crown governance act that updates the power of the PUB, on the one hand, and why there's an order-in-council that broadens the powers of the PUB on the other. Why these two separate mechanisms for what seems to be the same purpose?

Mr. Pallister: Well, first of all, the list is on the website, so the member can find it there, and the biographical information I did read onto the record is there as well. If he wishes to consult, it's there.

Secondly, I think it's self-explanatory; there are two different purposes for two different initiatives. One is to broaden the mandate of the PUB; the other is on governance of the Crown corporations, writ large. So they are two different issues.

He had asked earlier, and I'm better equipped to answer his question now, in respect of the purpose of the Public Utilities Board, and so I will elaborate a little bit on that. The board is an independent, quasi-judicial administrative tribunal. It operates pursuant to The Public Utilities Board Act. It is responsible for the regulation of public utilities and other matters, as defined under the act.

Other enactments assigning regulatory and/or adjudicative responsibilities to the board are the Crown corporations and public review and accountability act; The Greater Winnipeg Gas Distribution Act; The Gas Allocation Act; The Gas Pipe Line Act; The Prearranged Funeral Services Act; The Cemeteries Act; the City of Winnipeg act, in respect of passenger-carrier agreements; The Manitoba Water Services Board Act on appeals; The Highways Protection Act for appeals; and The Emergency 911 Public Safety Answering Point Act for appeals; The Consumer Protection Act; and also The Municipal Act, which is of interest, I think, as well.

Utilities regulated by the board are Manitoba Hydro; Centra Gas Manitoba, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Manitoba Hydro; Stittco Utilities Manitoba Ltd.; Swan Valley Gas Corporation; Manitoba Public Insurance, basic Autopac; and approximately 300 municipal co-operative and private water and sewer utilities.

With respect to the City of Winnipeg's water and sewer utility operations, the board has regulatory jurisdiction excepting for rate setting. Municipal water and sewer utilities owned and operated by the Manitoba Water Services Board are excluded from the board's jurisdiction, except that customers may appeal decisions of the Manitoba Water Services Board to the Public Utilities Board.

The membership is not less than three members. The board sits in panels, generally three, maybe two members, but in certain circumstances the chair only. Length of terms is at pleasure.

Responsibilities, which is what the member was asking about, I think, earlier: represents and or determines the public interest in the approval and/or establishment of fair and reasonable rates and other matters with respect to—for regulated utilities and for MPI; regulated utilities include natural gas and electrical energy, water and sewer and, with respect to MPI, basic compulsory automobile insurance; administers legislation governing pipeline safety in Manitoba; and licenses and oversees privately owned

cemeteries, crematoriums and prearranged funeral service providers and natural gas brokers as well.

The board also sets the maximum rates that can be charged for the cashing of specified provincial government or government enterprises cheques and provides recommendations to government, generally following triannual reviews of the rates charged by payday lenders; hears appeals regarding Highway Traffic Board, Manitoba Water Services Board, 911 operator decisions and, as well, natural gas, propane, water service disconnections; licenses natural brokers and sellers of pre-arranged funeral plans; approves, denies or varies certain public transportation and related agreements involving the City of Winnipeg; acts as a regulator with respect to MISO's requirements of Manitoba Hydro with respect to electrical reliability; holds public processes; issues public notices; and decisions and operates a website.

I know I'm out of time.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*(15:00)

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

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

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So, hello again, and hello to your staff.

So I just kind of want to start again the discussion in respect of some of the discussions that you've been having with Canada, with the feds, because we didn't really finish that line of questioning last time.

So can you advise how much dollars has been allocated for rural settlement services?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Well, I thank the member for the question.

Now it—rural settlement services—usually people are coming and settling in rural Manitoba come

through Winnipeg, so we do deal with them as part of the welcome place and the funding that goes through that. But when they get into the rural settlement sites, most of which are in conjunction with either a community association or a department—adult ed is what I'm looking for, the adult ed in the community—the federal government funds the settlement services for new immigrants from rural areas. So we would not directly fund them. Anything that's done through adult education would be something that we fund.

Ms. Fontaine: So does the department provide any type of funding or support for Westman immigration services in Brandon?

Mr. Wishart: So, in the case of Westman, any settlement services directly would be funded by the federal government. We would do the education portion related to any of the immigrants that came that way. So it's kind of a split arrangement, but the federal government would fund them directly and has been doing so since 2013.

Ms. Fontaine: So, when you say that it's kind of a split scenario, like, what would that look like and what's the split and what would the dollars be for—that you would be contributing for Westman immigration services?

Mr. Wishart: We don't actually contribute any dollars specifically to Westman immigration services. We do provide the recipients in that community access to additional adult education, and that would be our responsibility on that.

Ms. Fontaine: And what would be the dollar amount for that?

Mr. Wishart: For clarification, you're talking about adult education in—at—out of the Westman site?

Ms. Fontaine: Yes.

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

It's going to take us a few minutes to find that specific number, so if the member wants to move on to a couple of other questions, we could.

I just wanted to—and we'll get a specific number for the member related to the cost in Westman. Part of that, of course, will include other people that might have decided to access programs, but a fair chunk of it is actually for immigrants in—that have moved to that community.

And we're also looking at—I mentioned the REDI program and we went into it in some detail. We're

looking at initiating a REDI program in Brandon as well, but that will be driven—the nature of that program will be driven by the partners that we find in terms of industry, because as I mentioned, we work backwards from the job to the training position and then—we've seen some interest in that area, so we're working on that as well.

*(15:10)

Ms. Fontaine: So, while we're waiting for that, and then I do have some other requests for funding in different other organizations here, as well, but I'm interested in the REDI program that's in development in Brandon. So one of the things that we had talked about a couple of days ago in respect of, you know, industry kind of fuelling them the training, we noted that some of the training partners that you do have are, in many respects, very male-centred.

What is the approach to looking to be more inclusive in respect of women newcomers in—as you're in the beginning processes, right, of developing this program in Brandon, and which industries are you going to be reaching out to?

Mr. Wishart: Thank the member for the question. I understand what she's saying in terms of we need to get some gender equity in part of this process. And, of course, nothing that we start is ever gender specific or exclusive in that regard. But there is very substantial light manufacturing industry, welding industry there. That's unlikely to attract a lot of female participants, so we do get a small number. That would be one area.

We're also looking, of course, at the hospitality industry which is extremely strong in the Brandon area. And we would, of course, be looking at what might be available in terms of early childhood educators because we know that there's a significant child-care deficit virtually in every rural community in Manitoba and Brandon is no exception.

Ms. Fontaine: Just so I'm clear, when you say the hospitality industry, I mean, that can mean several different things. But in your estimation, what is that inclusive of?

Mr. Wishart: Our greatest co-operation in that area has been the hotel industry in particular and, of course, there you're dealing with a smaller number of players and it's easier to work with them. They're often a—larger and they have a fairly significant number of positions available. So they're good ones to work with and we have found them very co-operative in the past.

Ms. Fontaine: So, I mean, while I appreciate that, you know, we never start off on these—to quote you—we never start out on these processes in respect of kind of gender specific kind of industries and stuff like that. The reality is, though, right, that the industries that we've noted a couple of days ago—and even the industries that you've noted today save for—which is also kind of very gender specific—is the early childhood educators. Like, will you be doing a gendered analysis in respect of the industries that you're going to be trying to seek out in partnership?

Because as we spoke about—whenever, what day is it today? Today's Wednesday. Monday? *[interjection]* Monday. So as we spoke on Monday, like, it is really so important to the Manitoba economy, right? And to newcomer families that the women of the families are offered these opportunities in, you know, language training, obviously, and stuff like that, but also training for employment. So I'd like to hear what your—the department's commitment is to ensuring that there's kind of this partnership an analysis in respect of women's participation in whatever training programs there are.

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

We are in the process of consulting with a number of industries in Brandon area right now, but we're also working with the immigration groups themselves. And one of the advantages—and I think I mentioned this earlier—because everyone goes through Manitoba Start and Welcome Place, we actually have—for all our new immigrants we actually have their previous experience. Other provinces do not have the advantage of that, so they're sometimes at odds.

So we know what experience they have. We can try and work from that, as well, if they have experience that is relevant to Manitoba's job market. But we do try and achieve gender parity. That is part of the whole evaluation process; we make sure that we do not focus on one over the other. But, because it is driven a fair bit by job opportunities we're able to identify, we do not have complete control over whether it's exactly equitable but we certainly are well aware that there's need to do that.

I share the member's concern that, frankly, to succeed as a family in North America, and in particular in Manitoba's markets—job market, that both sides of the family need to have an opportunity to succeed in the job market. We're much more a two-income household situation here in Manitoba than in many cases where they might have come

from, so this is new and different, but we need to make sure that both members of the family are provided opportunity.

Ms. Fontaine: So, I mean, I'm pleased and I'm glad to see that I think we both agree, right, on the importance of lifting up newcomer women and having them actively participate in the economy—and in the Manitoba economy, within their family economy, but really for themselves as well, right. It is—I'm sure I don't need to tell anyone here that when women are educated and are, you know, self-sufficient, that it really is transformative in the lives of their children, actually intergenerationally, right, so I'm glad that we're on the same page on that.

But I guess my question still is: What's the commitment? Like, what is the commitment and how is that going to be executed by the department, really, to kind of execute a strategy, not only in Brandon, but really throughout Manitoba, right? Because I think that we have to be very cognizant that we need—you know, it's not enough to say that, yes, we, you know, we understand that, you know, newcomer women have to—we—there's a lot of work to be done, as you would know more than myself, right. But there's certainly a lot of work to be done in respect of making sure that there is equitable training opportunities for newcomer women.

So again, my question is, like, what, you know, what is the commitment and the approach going to be undertaken by the department?

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

And I guess there's a few things I'd like to discuss with the member related to this.

I mean, we have an ongoing process regarding introducing people to non-traditional occupations, so that's about gender equity as much as possible. And that is part of our—a larger-scale labour market development initiatives, in which we had a major review of—just this last summer, we went across the province and talked to groups all across the province and we were looking then at, you know, what do we need to do to get gender equity. We were looking at newcomers in particular. We were also looking at First Nations, because there's certainly a gender equity issue there as well in the opportunities, and also looking at persons with disabilities. That is something that we could do a better job on here in Manitoba, as well, getting them back into the workplace. Doesn't matter, you know, what the

gender is in regards to that. So we did full-on cross-province review on that.

When it comes to the REDI program and, as I mentioned, this is new program here in Manitoba. It's actually the first one in Canada to have a specific program to try and help newcomers, in particular refugees and asylum seekers. So we're still in the development stages on regards to that.

We're certainly very aware of the whole issue of gender equity as it relates to that and we try and apply that all across the board. There are some specific programs in the trades and training area that are trying to introduce people to non-traditional occupations, whether it's, you know, men-to-female occupations or vice versa. It works both ways. We've had some success in regards to that. I know that we have a number, a larger number of women in the apprenticeship system now than we ever did before.

* (15:20)

We're in the process of reviewing how we can try and get that working a little better because there's certainly a lot of people that have started in the apprentice system and kind of stalled in the process somewhere and need to be identified and see if they have barriers, or whether they're happy where they are, because that happens a fair bit of time too. They, you know, start as apprentice and they get stalled there because they found a job that they like and they're happy with that. It's good for them; they don't have to move on. So we're trying to track that, as well.

So we're making a very serious effort in terms of gender equity all across the board. I'm very much aware, you know, when—and we fight tradition to some degree when we—in the K-to-12 system when we're bringing vocational exposure into the schools, which we're doing a lot more of, that we need to be gender neutral about that and make sure that males and females have choices of what careers they see available to them. We're actually doing a very extensive—we have a Canada skills competition coming up at the end of May. It will be at the RBC centre across the way, here, and it's a national competition. And for us it provides not just an opportunity to showcase the students that we have in the system, which is great in itself, but because this is the first time it'll be actually indoors and really accessible compared to some of the previous ones. We're actually bringing a lot of school kids in from the K-to-12 system, right down into the grade 9s in particular. We hope to have as many as 12,000 kids

go through that whole process so that we're exposing the trades in that case to a lot wider group.

There's a bit of a natural bias, I guess, if we want to call it that, in the system because many of the high school counsellors are university grads and, accordingly, probably push certain people certain ways. And we're trying to get rid of that innate bias as much as possible by providing the students themselves the opportunity to see what options are available to them, and there are a lot more now available than there ever was before.

Ms. Fontaine: So—well, miigwech for that. I—every time you give me an answer, I have, like, three more questions just deriving from your answer. So I'm going to get back to some of these, but I am interested in the cross-provincial review that you just mentioned. Can you provide just a little bit more details in respect of, like, when did that start, when was it completed and is it for public consumption?

Mr. Wishart: There is a report that we can certainly share with you that we used.

It was—well, we did a site in Winnipeg here. I think we started in June, if I remember correctly, and it went through the summer. But we did three sites across southern Manitoba and one in the North, and the one in the North was in Thompson. Was—we invited a wide range of players, including the not-for-profit community because I recognize that they're a very significant player in creating jobs one way or the other, whether it's directly with the not-for-profits or through social enterprise and things like that. We did actually emphasize social enterprise a fair little bit as part of that process, because we see significant opportunities in that area. So we can certainly share that with the member. It was a really good process. I attended all of the meetings myself and we got a wide range of comments. We did hear quite a bit about gender equity and making sure that we made people much more aware of the opportunities, the vocational opportunities, the trades and training.

One of the reasons we structured our department this way,—and perhaps the member's heard me talk about this particular issue—is to make all of these linkages work much better, to have in the K-to-12 system that the colleges and universities, post secondaries—but also to have the trades and trainings connected to the K-to-12 system much more directly. And that provides us with the opportunity, like we talked about earlier, with the national skills competition coming, to make sure that those kinds of linkages occurred, and that we do a lot more touring.

We've been encouraging people in the trades to get down into the high school system much more because we see that there's great opportunity in that whole area. There's a lot of people out there, certainly people that want to go through the college and other post-second—and university systems. That's great; I mean, we have needs in that area.

But bottom line, we have 170,000 people that are going to retire by 2022. That's—I mean, and a portion of them we expect to come as immigrants, but a big portion of them we expect to train ourselves here out on Manitoba. That's a challenging number to get to, so we know that we have to reach out to people that have not followed through in the past, just on the numbers.

So we need to get much more engagement, and I mentioned some specific areas earlier where we talked about new Canadians, but First Nations communities as well, we see great opportunity and a need from Manitoba's point of view and their point of view to make sure that they have the opportunities.

I know during our consultation in Thompson we heard from Vale about a special program that had been put together by them in conjunction with their Northern Sector Council and that was for their mining industry in particular, some were underground and some were in the crushing plant. And 30—I think it was 32 individuals, none of whom had completed high school or were likely to, but they were trained specifically to meet the needs of Vale and they all went directly into jobs as job trials, kind of like the REDI program that we talked about, where they actually had job experience as part of the training process.

They're all working in that industry and all are making \$80,000 plus. So, this was a really great opportunity that probably they never would have gotten the chance at any other way, because sort of—traditional job requirements for—like—so Vale and many mining, is you must have your Grade 12. That wasn't part of this process, so that they had access to jobs that they would not normally have had access to because of the program.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech. So, just to be clear, you'll get me a copy of that report?

Mr. Wishart: I'm informed it's up on the website.

Ms. Fontaine: So, I know that we were still waiting in respect of some of the dollar—or, the specific dollar amount from the Westman immigration—or,

immigrant services in Brandon. So the other pieces that I'm looking for for specific amounts are from the South Central Immigrant Services in Morden and the Eastman Immigrant Services in Steinbach in respect to those dollar amounts.

Mr. Wishart: We have the Westman numbers now. We'll get you the specifics for Morden-Winkler, I assume, and—because they're one office—and Steinbach for correction.

The adult ed dollars in Westman—*[interjection]* Yes. Thank you.

Total for Westman, which is—all of Westman, is \$644,000 for adult ed, and just remind the member that some of that would be for immigrants and some of it would not be. And we don't really separate them that way. And also, for—specific for Westman Immigrant Services, which would be in the education thing, was \$50,000. Yes, \$50,200 would be the specific number that they got last year.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm sorry, I'm a little confused here.

So the \$50,200 is for what, specifically? That's separate from the adult education services?

Mr. Wishart: The 50.2 is specific to Westman Immigrant Services for their adult ed courses, but people that participate in the Westman Immigrant Services adult ed also could participate in the larger Westman adult ed process. So they could also be part of that \$644,000. It's not exclusive.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, I think I get it.

So, in respect to South-central and Eastman, am I missing anything else? Any other immigrant services? There—I must be.

* (15:30)

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member. Yes, there are some other sites. We have a number across the province and a number even inside the city of Winnipeg. So if you would like, we could get you specific numbers for immigrant-related ones, and then the total adult ed total, because they're—as I pointed out, they're not mutually exclusive. A lot of the immigrant-related ones go into English as a second language specifically, but if they do well on that, of course, then they often move over into the other, and that's really what the whole process is about, and we—why we want the linkages to be as strong as they are because they get you, you know, get you the skills that you need to do well here in Manitoba. Some of it is just the equivalency process

in terms of education, GED and things like that. But some of it is specific to different types of trades too.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, so just to be clear, so we're all on the same page: you're going to provide me a list with all of those different sites and the dollar amount? Okay. Miigwech.

Mr. Wishart: Yes. We can provide you with those specific amounts, yes.

Ms. Fontaine: So, well, I want to—I still want to spend a little bit of time or—on the Provincial Nominee Program, but I just have a couple more, as I said in the beginning when we started here, is in respect of, I guess, some of the discussion with the feds.

And so I know we talked just on a very 'cursorary' discussion on Monday, so can you tell me what other kinds of supports or additional funding has the department provided to Emerson to help deal with the influx of refugees?

Mr. Wishart: Just for clarification, you're talking about specific supports for Syrian refugees or Syrian refugees and asylum seekers? Is that what you're specific—?

Ms. Fontaine: Yes.

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

Now, we did cover this a little bit the other day. We talked about the 75,000 that we do specific demand, so I would remind the member that that was over two years. The first year was mostly focused on Syrians; second year is more of a mixed—some Syrian, some asylum seeker. And, also, the 110,000 specific to Welcome Place—same thing, over two years. That's 110,000 each year for two years—so make sure we understand that.

Then we have—this year we've initiated the REDI program, which—the biggest chunk of that at this point in time is focused around the Syrian refugees. It's \$1.1 million. But asylum seekers that would qualify once they get their status are also part of that program, so we do get a little crossover there.

I just would share with the member, we received a letter from the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg the other day from Kate Kehler, their executive director, really thanking us very much for our solid commitment to asylum seekers and—that are coming to Manitoba and, in particular, programs like we have initiated and ready as it relates to the Syrian

refugees because it is new and it has been fairly successful, at least in our initial findings.

We think it's actually the right way to go about this, because it is—and I mentioned earlier—very often what governments end up doing is just training and not training to a specific job so that people have—still have difficulty making that leap into the workplace. And the way we're doing this, we're bringing the workplace to them, effectively. So it is, I think, much stronger in terms of its commitment and as—and I believe, will get us much better results, both in the short- and long-term.

Ms. Fontaine: So, when I ask about supports for Emerson, right, for the folks that are helping with the influx of asylum seekers and refugees—when I ask about those types of supports, does that not come from your department? Like the—so that the town—are we giving the town of Emerson supports, not—

An Honourable Member: Oh.

Madam Chairperson: Honourable Minister.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you to the member for the question.

For clarity, we don't supply directly to the local municipal structure any particular supports directly. They would, of course, as a municipality, be eligible—anything that they got out of Aboriginal affairs and municipal government structure and, for instance, like their safety equipment and their safety training are—at least—especially the source of the dollars for the equipment would be at least partially supported out of that, though the specifics often vary from year to year, but we don't supply any ongoing operational dollars related to that.

We do supply our dollars to MANSO and the immigration community for transportation. We're leaving out of this whole mix the housing issue which does come, as I indicated, from Families. And, if a family is not able to successfully enter the workplace and they end up going on EIA, of course, that too comes from Families. So that is—there are significant costs and potential costs here to the Province of Manitoba, but directly we don't support the asylum seekers initially.

And some of—I mean, there's health-care costs—talking about that too. It comes from—we talked about four different departments, four different places. I know that it's hard to sort it all out, but you stop and think about what the average need is, then you can break it into pieces.

We work very closely together. We have a working group that meets regularly to try and make sure that we're not getting behind in any area. It is a little hard for us to budget this, because it's an unknown. So, really, to know the exact amount that would be spent in this year, really would not be entirely available until Public Accounts for the year are available.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, miigwech. Yes, that's why I haven't asked any questions in respect of housing, because I know we'd spoke about that it falls under Families. So I'm glad to know and I'm—I say miigwech for the clarification that in respect of any supports for Emerson that that, from what I understand, comes from indigenous and municipal affairs—I get it. Okay, so I won't ask any questions on that.

So I just want to kind of go back to the Provincial Nominee Program, and I know that—so I want to kind of just get a better sense or understanding, and you're probably going to have to really walk me through this just so I understand this as clear as I can. Because I know that when we spoke about 2015, we said that there were—well, you said that there were 6,423 applications, and 4,977 were approved. In 2016, there were 6,251 applications and 4,621 were approved. To date, in 2017, we said—you said that there's been about 12–2,500; 1,400 approved—I get it. Estimates are somewhere around 45 to 5,000 for this year.

* (15:40)

So what I'm trying to kind of wrap my head around is the backlog that we've been discussing. So can you explain what we're talking about in respect of specifically—and not for a specific year yet, but backlog. Like, what are we talking about when we're talking about backlog?

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

So the numbers I quoted to the member in terms of the number for each particular year, those were the ones that were processed in that year. So 6,400 was the number that we talked about for 2015, and you have the numbers and we can get that, as well. Some of those were quite old. They go back quite a number of years. In fact, I think the oldest one that—was 2009 or 2008 that we were processing through. So those were the numbers that were processed in those given years.

To give you an idea of—

An Honourable Member: That's the backlog now?

Mr. Wishart: The backlog now, which is very minimal after we have—*[interjection]*—in process, sorry. I've got to watch my terminology here. The number of—that are in process right now for 2016 is 486. So that's really what we're in the process of doing right now. We have committed to a six-month turnaround and on—for that small number we should have no problem making that.

Sometimes what we run into when we're processing these is they need certain documentation and getting the documentation for some of these things can be very slow. Depends on where they come from in the world. I think you're—probably can imagine situations where the records and supports are not very good anymore for whatever—whether it's war-torn or whether it's just civil unrest or whether it's just they haven't been doing a good job. One of the real problems is they often have educational paperwork like graduation certificates and things like that. Those can be very difficult to get, and we do end up with people that are waiting on certain pieces of paperwork and sometimes go beyond the six months that we aim for just because of that.

Ms. Fontaine: So in process right now is 486, and is that of the 2,500 that you've—you referred to on Monday? And you said that there's 14 that have been—1,400 that have been approved. So this 486 fits in where?

Mr. Wishart: That 486 would be part of that 2,500.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, so are in process. Would it be fair to say that that's—typically, you would have said that's a backlog? Or we've changed the—no? Okay.

So I still want to kind of understand, then, the backlog and what were the numbers that we were talking about?

Mr. Wishart: Now, as of September, when we started to eliminate the backlog, we had about 4,000 active files, and we had about 2,000 that were effectively backlogged that hadn't had anything done with them. So that would be the combination of the two. Some of the active files went back a number of years as we've said, as far back as 2008. Many of them had been looked at, they were wanting something in terms of—they weren't complete in some way, and no follow up had been done. They'd just been set aside.

We reached out to all of those people and made sure that no one was waiting for a specific—I think frankly it's very disrespectful to take an application

for someone like that that wants to—that expressed an interest in coming to this country, and in particular to Manitoba, and not clear up the issue, may leave them waiting. Sometimes it's things that they can actually help us with. If it's as I mentioned, paperwork in particular, they can help at their end. Though sometimes we have to initiate it all from this end.

If it's, for instance, the language levels, which is another frequent barrier, they can go back to school in the interim. I mean, if you've been waiting since 2008, which would be the worst-case scenario, you've had lots of time to go back to school to improve your English if that was the barrier and move yourself up to the levels so that you would qualify.

So we have reached out to all of those and cleared that up. As of now, we have 22 waiting.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay well now—I'm confused yet again, because—okay, first off September what? I'm assuming—

Mr. Wishart: It was September 2016 on the record.

* (15:50)

Ms. Fontaine: So, okay, so now I've got a whole bunch of numbers. Now I'm not clear what the 22 number is.

Mr. Wishart: The 22 would be applications that we have right now that are older than 2016. So those are ones we're waiting on, the ones I had talked about, sort of in general and waiting for specifics. Most of those will be resolved at some point in the near future, but we don't know. Depends how long it takes to get some of this paperwork.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for clarifying that for me.

So we have 22—excuse me—22 applications that are older than 2016 that are still in the queue, still being—*[interjection]*—in process. We have 486 that are still in the process for 2017 out of the 2,500 that we've received to date.

Mr. Wishart: That would be correct.

Ms. Fontaine: So when we talk about the total backlog that everybody was talking about, then, are we saying that the backlog was only the—in September of 2016 was only 2,000 files? And simply because nothing had been done with them? Or are you talking about the full 6,000 that you indicated here. You said that there were 4,000 active, 2,000 backlogged.

So I'm just trying to figure out what the total backlog was in your estimation here.

Mr. Wishart: So the member's probably looking for that number that we often refer to.

When we came into government on April of 2016, there were 5,100 applications. Those would have been in—either set aside as—they would not have been of the current year from historical points or in process for that particular year. Quite a lot of them, as I mentioned, were ones where no one had reached—there was clearly an issue with the application; they were missing something or an incomplete or some portion was not appropriately filled in and no one had followed up with them, and that—we made that effort to do that and get them either in process and moving forward or off the list altogether.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, so—which brings me, in fact, to your last line: or get them off the list altogether.

So I know that when there were some questions in question period, I know there's been some discussions in respect of the backlog and I remember specifically in a question period, and I think it was the member from Burrows had asked, you know, whether or not the backlog had been satisfied, and you had indicated that, in fact, there was no more backlog. Right?

So is it that, you know, they were—the vast majority of them were approved or not approved, or did you just get them off the list and in respect of this new structure that you—the department has undertaken in respect of the expression of interest, did everybody have to just go back and reapply under the expression of interest?

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

Now, the ones that—everyone that was in that 5,100 backlog we actually reached out to and processed every one of those applications. So they would have been contacted. There may have been a very scattered few that had moved and we could not follow up. But pretty much 100 per cent were reached out to. Of that 5,100 that were in application, some are still in the process, as I indicated. Part of that 6,000, they would have been part of that 6,000 we had processed in the last year. But approximately 70 per cent were approved.

So it was not a question of just getting them off the table and you know, not—and rejecting them. We were actually seriously processing those

applications, and though many of them went back a number of years and the older ones are the ones that are the hardest to clean up, of course, as the member I'm sure appreciates, because even finding the person, in some cases, can be the issue.

Ms. Fontaine: So, can the minister clarify for me, then, what did you mean when you said get them off the list altogether?

Mr. Wishart: I referred to processing.

Ms. Fontaine: So when you said get them off the list altogether you're talking about that 70 per cent of them were approved and that all 5,100, save for a couple, were all contacted. That's what you mean by—

Madam Chairperson: Honourable Minister.

Mr. Wishart: Yes. We would have contacted them. We either approved them or declined them, and so that's—every one of those applications was processed.

Ms. Fontaine: So, again, that was the 5,100 from 2016. So we said 70 per cent were approved, and I'm getting the numbers here—so how many—how many numbers were approved out of that 5,100 and how many were not approved?

Mr. Wishart: The approximate percentage was 70 per cent of that 5,100, so that would have been a little over 3,500 of that total and that would have been part of our allocation for '16-17.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay. I'm just trying to make sense of all the numbers here.

So can you explain to me, then, in 2016 when we talked about this on Monday and you said, and I just repeated it when we started here at 3, the 6,251 and then the 4,621 that were—

Mr. Wishart: Well, Madam Chair, and confusion is understandable because it's calendar versus fiscal, so when it comes to the numbers that we quote in terms of MPNP, it's in the calendar year versus the fiscal year, so in—just to give you some examples here, for 2016, we had total of approved of 4,621—that was 75 per cent approval rate, and refused would have been 1,512—25 per cent. So, for that particular year, that would be that calendar year.

Ms. Fontaine: And the 5,100 is from what time period then? *[interjection]* Because that's 2016 as well—I wasn't finished.

Mr. Wishart: That number was in April of that year. That was on-hand applications, not processed.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, miigwech. It is very—trying to make sense of all the numbers, so I appreciate your patience and I appreciate your staff trying to explain all of this.

So I'd like to kind of go over, then, the process that when you came on in respect of eliminating the backlog, and I appreciate that it's a lot of work to reach out to every single—and I appreciate that your department did that and your staff did that. I think that's very good.

So I'm just wondering in respect of, then, were there new criteria in respect of approving an application that were employed? And I know that we started to talk a little bit about the criteria and your staff graciously offered to walk me through all of it, but I'm just wondering if there was new criteria that were employed.

* (16:00)

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

Basically, we used the same criteria until November when we actually made a minor change in that—and I think I referenced the fact that they used to get negative points for having a close relative in another province, and we have removed that because we felt that that was an unfair bias. You don't really have control over what provinces your relatives settle into.

Otherwise, we have used the same criteria and we can certainly go through that if you would like. I mean, the big part of the points system is based on your language and your education, and also family members, whether you have close relatives here in Manitoba. Previous work experience in Manitoba is another points system; completed post-secondary program in Manitoba is, of course, a very valuable one; and ongoing employment, whether you have something lined up here in Manitoba is another point. There is actually a whole sheet that is available as to how you go through and that's the same criteria. It's largely unchanged. To make any major changes in this, we would have to have a discussion with the federal government because we—it's a mutually agreed on process.

Ms. Fontaine: So, in respect of, then, the folks that were approved went on to their processes, but the ones that were not approved, were they invited—what happened? Were they invited then to participate in the expression-of-interest pool, or, or?

Mr. Wishart: So they would have received a letter from us stating that they were declined and given the reason that they were declined. So it's their choice after that whether they would go to the expression-of-interest pool and the new process. There is no reason why they couldn't do that. We really don't track that though.

Ms. Fontaine: In order to get through some of the backlog, did the department hire additional staff?

Mr. Wishart: No, we did not hire any additional staff. We did, certainly, put a lot of work in front of our people, and, in fact, we had a bit of a appreciation lunch the other day for the very hard work that they have put forward to deal with this and to get our whole system up and current.

I think now we have—you look around Canada and, of course, we're always comparing how we deal with MPNP because it is a program that all provinces have. We look—we're comparing what we're doing and what other provinces are doing. I would daresay that our program is now the most current and one of the more productive programs in terms of numbers and the number of people we have in the whole process, so it's working reasonably well at the moment.

Ms. Fontaine: How many folks do you have in the department that are actually doing that processing work?

Mr. Wishart: We have 25 spots for immigration officers. Currently, 23 are filled.

Ms. Fontaine: Will those two additional—or those two spots that are vacant right now, will they be—will people be hired in those positions?

Mr. Wishart: Yes, It's our intention to fill those spots. But there's always a turnover, as the member, I'm sure, appreciates. So we are always hiring new people to fill vacancies.

Ms. Fontaine: So—but in respect of the—I guess, the more traditional 25 spots, there's not a freeze on any of those spots? And so the additional two spots, you will be actively looking to fill those spots?

Mr. Wishart: That's correct.

Ms. Fontaine: Has there been an increase in the budget for immigration officers or for employees to be able to execute this work?

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

And the answer would be there has been no increases.

Ms. Fontaine: So no increases in the overall budget for this particular—so, in respect of this new kind of process in respect of the expression-of-interest pool, is that additional work now on the 23 immigration officers? Does it warrant that perhaps there's additional officers that are needed? And is it the immigration officers that actually review the applications that are in the expression-of-interest pool?

Mr. Wishart: Well, I thank the member for the question. I know she's trying to get her head around how we're doing it now as compared to the old way.

And, in many ways, the new system actually makes less work for immigration consultants because we have additional information in terms of—coming from the application expression-of-interest pool. And I could certainly refer the member to the online information that's available and on how to apply the expression-of-interest pool.

But probably one of the more relevant sections is, all eligible candidates interested in applying for Manitoba MPNP must first submit an expression of interest to the program. EUIs are entered into a pool on a regular basis, the highest ranking candidates in each category are issued letters of advice to apply.

So that's the way we do it, and so they actually just have to search in the categories that they're—that know they have a job opportunity or a skills demand in. And that's—and they can pull those down much more quickly rather than have to go through literally all of the applications to try and sort out people, and now it is actually much more automated and much more structured. And then once you get an LAA, or a—letters of advice to apply, you are to submit a full application and provide all of the information required on the immigratemanitoba.com website.

Mr. Scott Johnston, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It's actually a much more structured system now, but we are—probably the additional work that is required is more around the relationship with the work—with the workplace—is to be strengthened. And we're still developing a lot of that. I mentioned earlier that we used a lot of sector council information, private industry information; plus also now we're working a lot more with the post-secondaries and their educational programs.

So we're combining information, so there's a little additional work in—related to that. And we're trying to make that as current as possible so that we can do six-month reviews and make sure that—actually we're trying to do quarterly reviews in terms of the labour market information that we put up there. But we do six-month reviews of the application process.

* (16:10)

Ms. Fontaine: So I know that on Monday when we were kind of finishing up, just at the very, very end we were starting to discuss—and I was trying to wrap my head around the \$500 fee—and we were talking about the total cap that we can have in respect of—I wasn't sure if it was a total cap of applications, and so I'd like to kind of revisit that.

So I know that there is a cap in respect of how many applications we approve, and what I was trying to get at was if there were more invitations to apply, at which point you have to pay the \$500 fee, what happens with those dollars if you're not approved?

Mr. Wishart: So we would only pull down the number that we would be allowed to bring in under our quota, so 5,500. The only time that someone would be replaced in that process if they—their application contained incorrect information. So there would be a few. What we're trying to do is have our process really as close to the 5,500 number as possible. So in an ideal situation we would only bring in \$5,500. But there is always a small number. There is a certain element of dishonesty that occurs in the world. I'm sure the member's aware of that and a lot of it seems to be focused around forged documents and we do identify those on occasion, and when those are the case that application would be rejected, but we'd keep the fee in that case.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, so, I mean, that's what I'm trying to kind of understand here because we're saying that in this new system, including the \$500 fee, right. So you make your application to the expression-of-interest pool, you're invited to then apply at which point you've got to pay the \$500 fee. So to date, as you indicated on Monday, there's been 2,500 applications. Fourteen have been—or 1,400 have been approved, but I'm assuming you got \$500 from all those 2,500 applications.

So what I'm trying to figure out, right—if we had 2,500 applications and everybody paid \$500 but we only approved 1,400, where are those dollars and are they getting returned to the individuals?

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

I know it's very confusing. We're—go back to member that we start on the calendar year so that 2,500 is actually the calendar year. We actually haven't charged anybody anything in terms of the fee yet. We're starting that on May the 15th. So no one has paid the \$500 fee, gives a little leeway because applications at the end of the year. But we are—there will be—I guess if we have 2,500 out of the 5,500, there will be about 3,000 individuals, give or take a few, that will be charged the \$500 fee for this particular year, and that would be—and we would keep that fee, assuming that—well, in all cases.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay. So I—okay, so the fee is starting on May 15th; I get that, that's great. But the bottom line is is that let's just say as you just used your numbers, we're going to get an additional—you're going to take only an additional 3,000 applications. You're not going to go above that for applications, but we know that you're not going to approve all those 3,000 applications. But you're still taking peoples' money.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question, because I know that this is—it's very confusing.

The—under the old system we had a 70 per cent approval rate. Under our new system, where we only calling down out of expression of interest those that have a specific combination of skills that we have a demand for, we approach 100 per cent in terms of approval rate.

So only those very few that, for some reason—well, I mentioned misrepresentation as one of the principal causes—would be the ones that were declined. So we're going to run a 99 per cent approval rating for those that are brought in from the EOI pool, and the ones that we have asked to fill in a complete application. And those are the ones we charge the fee for. So there's not going to be a lot of people that are charged the fee and rejected. There would be good cause for the rejection in those cases, as I mentioned is misinformation or documents that do not turn out to be what they are purported to be.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay, so from January 1st, 2017—right, calendar year—to December 31st, 2017. So far—so we're going to be allowed 5,500 applications. January 1st, December 31st, 2017. So far we've had 2,500 applications, but only 1,400 have been approved.

But, save for that, the next 3,000 that are going to be invited from the expression-of-interest pool, they will be invited to apply, they will—I mean, I don't know what the heck date it is right now—so, in five days all those folks, I'm assuming—let's just say, for argument's sake, the 3,000, will be invited to apply, pay their \$500. And what you're saying is that, save for a couple of, you know, whatever, I didn't go to school here, I really don't understand English, blah blah blah—whatever the thing is—all 3,000, give or take a couple, will be approved?

Mr. Wishart: I believe the member's pretty much got it.

Ms. Fontaine: So will there be any—because, again, our cap is 5,500, I get that, we all get that—will there be any additional applications or additional, you know—not applications, but invites to apply, or is the department strictly going to keep to 5,500?

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

The 5,500 is a number that comes to us at joint federal-provincial agreement. So it's not really our choice to do more than that, you know, even if we wanted to. And, as I mentioned, I think after the end of time the other day that there has been a time in the past when provinces—other provinces didn't use their full allocations and they were available late in the season and you could do, you know, a few hundred over whatever it was. That doesn't seem to happen anymore because everybody's realized the very valuable nature of these types of programs. And so we expect that we will not be offered any additional, so we'll be working with the assumption that our number will be 5,500.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, that's a little bit more clear. The numbers are all crazy, all over the place. So I appreciate you mapping that out and walking with me that—through that.

* (16:20)

So, in respect of the \$500 that we briefly spoke about—and, again, I know that—I've got all these bloody notes here and I don't even know where any of my stuff is—but you had mentioned that it was, like, almost 3 point something, \$3.5 million that it was going to bring into the department.

And, again, if you can just refresh my memory, was that annually, \$3.5 million? At—and I guess that's \$3.5 million at 55–5,500 applications per calendar year?

Mr. Wishart: Well, and I thank the member for the question. I know that this whole thing can be particularly confusing. I'm not sure my answer's going to help very much in regards to this.

It could be up to \$3.5 million. It would be the amount that we would receive at \$500 per application. But I would remind the member that that will be on the fiscal year, not the calendar year.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Minister, I wanted to explore with you, you've made the statement the last couple of meetings that you've shifted the emphasis to trying to specifically accept people in the program that have job offers and have skills to match those job offers and to put a greater emphasis on that. And you seem to have a two-step process now where you do an expression of interest and then an offer related to a job opportunity that ensures, as you just said earlier, 99 per cent or a very high percentage of them are going to be accepted right away.

One of the things I've been reading about in terms of careers lately is only about 20 per cent of people, and this is American, so—but it may not apply to Canada, I think it's similar—wind up in actually doing what they train for. About 80 per cent wind up doing something else different in life. Probably all of us in this room might actually qualify in that. I don't think anybody set out to be an MLA, but here we are.

So, given that 80 per cent of people actually wind up doing something different, do you have anything in your acceptance criteria which looks at, for lack of a better term, and I'm making this up, labour market resiliency?

We have a very large small- and medium-sized business community in Manitoba. Many of those businesses do not have the wherewithal to do forecasting of what they need for employees. They sort of make it up as they go along. And they try to attract people into those businesses that can evolve and roll with the business as it develops, and often into roles that nobody ever anticipated before. For example, one of the highest skill sets that seems to be in demand these days is people that have a very strong ability to connect on relationship basis with external stakeholders, customers, other members in their universe where they're doing business.

So, given my experience with a lot of the newcomers I've seen in Manitoba, many of them wind up setting up their own businesses and then employing other people and often are trying to attract

people that will be loyal to that business for a long period of time.

Do you have anything in there that allows you to draw on a pool of people that may not have a specific job market or job opportunity available to them but show the characteristics of citizens that would either create or adapt quickly to labour market opportunities without having a specific job opportunity on the hook for them?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for his question, because, I mean, he's absolutely right; very few of us come into life to—depending to—or planning on being where we end up. And certainly there's lots of data to support that here in Canada, as well as some that the member has referred to.

When it comes to trying to align people with particular skill sets to a particular demand, we do depend an awful lot on sector councils for information, and it is their job, of course, to reach out to the small and medium businesses as well. And I suspect that they actually do a pretty good job of representing them, because they tend to work with those as well.

But we also bring in people that have what is demonstrated as, sort of, high-demand competences. We know that they have good skills; it's in the general area that we know that we have a skills demand set for. They will come whether or not they have a specific job. So there is, if you want to call it, a little bit of a sleeve of transaction where people will come over simply because they have what we know are high-demand skill sets, without a specific job attached to them. There is the points system that we talked a little bit about earlier, and, of course, they can score extremely well on the points system without actually having a specific job to go to.

So we do certainly use that process. One of the nice things about the expression-of-interest process is we actually have a very quick way of monitoring, you know, who has these particular skill sets in something that we know that we have growth in that particular area of, and we can bring—call those people down, if you want to look at it that way, and say we're—you know, we believe that there's opportunities for you in this area, that we would appreciate an application, even though you don't have a specific job to come to here in Manitoba.

There is not a locked in in part of that process, but we're trying to make sure that a higher percentage are still—are in that particular area. I'm

very well aware of the fact that many end up in the business themselves. A lot of that, I think, frankly, is driven by the fact that the training that they've received in other countries is often not recognized or not recognized as well here, and so they come here, find that they can't quite function or their skill set's not recognized—we're certainly trying to do our best to minimize that, by the way—but that they're not—their skill set's not recognized here. So they find, well, you know, I have this skill; I know I have this skill. There's opportunities in this area. I'll go into business for myself in this area, and that's really good.

These are not just run-of-the-mill, off-the-street workers; these are highly motivated people. To have the wherewithal and the ambition to uproot your family and come to a new country takes a lot of determination, and I think we certainly need to recognize that they're going to be successful in our job market almost without exception.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the minister for that response. In the main, I agree with him. I think people bring certain competencies without a job offer that will allow them to have a high degree of success, and you indicated that before, that most of our newcomers, regardless of whether they have a job offer, wind up being employed in a short amount of time, homeowners within five years, and that was our experience when we were government too.

Can you talk a bit about what's competencies or skill sets you think are in high demand in Manitoba, and broadly? Can you tell us about that?

* (16:30)

Mr. Wishart: Well, I thank the member for the question—a little bit open-ended because we could certainly talk about an awful large area. But I'll give the member a few specifics that we're finding that we have huge demand for. Of course, almost every one of the trades, you know? If you have—if you're at any point in the trade system, particularly if you've got exposure to the apprenticeship system, a great number of opportunities.

Now one of the other big areas is, of course, the transportation sect. Truck drivers—absolutely. They come here, they get stolen from one company to the other on a regular basis. I think that's the complaint I hear from that sector more than anything else, that so-and-so stole my drivers and I'll have to bring in some more. You know? And there's just an endless demand.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Life sciences, in particular. A big part of that, surprisingly, is ag and ag processing. These days there's been some huge growth in that and that's really good news. Manufacturing—in particular anything related to aerospace these days, has been very good and we're all very pleased to see that.

Graphic design is another one that we're seeing significant interest in. Engineers of—especially electronic engineers—particular areas.

To some degree we're—we follow this, of course, because we're wanting to train our students to this—to these programs as well. But we do have a few other specific sets of skills that are not professions, if you want to put it that way, things like sewing machine operators—we certainly have a demand for those as well, and they do reasonably well.

I toured a facility in Morden the other day that does work for Canada Goose, and a lot of the people that work there were actually spouses of MPNP immigrants. They were making very good money there as sewing machine operators—in excess of 20 dollars an hour which, considering that they probably didn't have a very high level of skill set other than that. I know that their English was a bit of a challenge for them. They were—we were talking about how we could assist them in that process as well, and that's one of the places that we actually looked at using that additional dollars that's providing courses for the non-applicant family members, if I could define things that way. There's places we can do that as well.

We're waiting, of course, to see what the federal government is going to do because they were providing some services in that area and there's been some discussions about withdrawing those services. That's on hold right now. So we're just kind of waiting to see what the long-term commitment will be there, but we know that there's a lot of value in doing that because they're much more successful in the community. They adapt better here and they become, you know, much better Manitobans, much better Canadians.

Ms. Fontaine: So just before I ask what I hope is my last question, my colleague from Fort Rouge just wanted me to advise that we probably need one more day on Education and Healthy Child, just to give your staff a heads up.

So I just want to be absolutely clear that—so January 1st–December 31st, calendar years—so all the

folks that are still on the expression-of-interest pool, come December 31st, that's completely wiped clean and people have to reapply? That's what I understood that you had said. However—hold on; I have one more question.

As well as, if we get to December 31st and you've actually got applications that are still in the queue, what happens with those applications, that—let's say, for the remainder of this year, those 3,000 that we said were going to be 100 per cent—almost 100 per cent approved, if they haven't been approved by December 31st?

Mr. Wishart: Perhaps I've, well, misrepresented, or we've misunderstood each other in that. We do not actually drop them at any particular point. You're in the expression-of-interest pool for one year from your point of application, so it's ongoing. And we notify you when you come up to that one year. So you could reapply the next day.

So I—you know, we haven't been doing this long enough to know how that's going to work out but at having approximately 15,000 in at any one time, you know, we still have a very high level of interest. If, for some reason, that was to change, we would certainly re-evaluate that, but we know that we've become a destination that many people around the world want to come to. I think that speaks well of our society here and the way that we treat people as new immigrants here in Manitoba. We expect that that number will remain very high, but they will be notified one year from their point of application and given—and told that it's been a year and that we would be dropping or discontinuing their application. They can reapply again, basically, the next day.

You're really wondering about the end of the year. If—it's certain, ongoing current process. So, as we get to the end of the year, if we've used up our 5,500 for that particular calendar year, then we start on the next year's allocations right after January. So you would—if you were in part of the process—being processed—and you were part of that 5,500—we would carry that through and you would be carried backwards into the previous year. If you were not part of that, and we were in your—brought someone in, as I mentioned to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), because of their competencies, they would probably go on to the next year.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I am very grateful to be granted a little bit of time to ask some questions here in Estimates.

The minister's very aware of how passionate I am with regards to immigration here in the province, and I have to say that, over the last several months, we have seen a significant improvement in the handling of the assessment process by The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program with the government committing to eliminating the backlog and having all applications processed within six months. I still don't like the new \$500 fee, but I'm picking my battles. In an effort to continually improve the program to benefit applicants while enhancing the provincial economy alike, the program must address the disparity between its intention to nominate skilled workers while making it increasingly more difficult for applicants in regulated occupations to receive their nomination within the province.

My first question is: What is this governments' stance on applicants intending to enter regulated occupations in the province, and what methods of support are available for these applicants?

Mr. Wishart: Just for clarity, are you talking about people that are already here and are applying to the 'regula', or coming with a regulated occupation? Just for clarity.

Ms. Lamoureux: Coming with the regulated occupation.

Mr. Wishart: Okay, I hope I can answer the member's question.

I mean, we certainly want people to fit into their occupations, and we, as much as possible now, are doing more pre-arrival determining—make sure that the course that they have is recognized here by—and you're talking about the different occupations. Of course, that follows under the different regulations for occupations. So many of them, the colleges for—specifically for any particular skill, the nursing and others.

* (16:40)

We also have an office of fairness which has been ongoing for some time. We've actually gone through a bit of a review process in the last year on that, working with the different licensing occupation offices, trying to make sure that we had everything in place, that we could make sure that this works as flawlessly as possible or seamlessly as possible, so that people, when they do come, are recognized in their occupation. It's not a win for anyone when they're not able to operate in their occupation. We bring them here because we think that they have a certain skill set that will help our economy, so if

we've—not able to use them in that particular area, that's not a positive for us. And, of course, for them, it's also very negative, because they come here thinking that they can do something and then we find, yes, well, for whatever reason or technicalities, they can't. And, of course, the country that trained them has money invested in them as well.

Sort of as a last resort related to that, if there was a gap in education, we do offer retraining through—usually through the college. That is one of the areas that we see—it's a barrier—becomes a barrier—one of the areas that we see the discretionary funds that the \$500 fee represents as something that we could use in that area. We're not going to start leading with that unless we find that there is a particular need in a particular area, and that depends a lot on institutions in the country of origin whether they're recognized or not and how many people we have in that particular area.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank the minister for his answer. We all want to see the transition go very successfully.

In light of an aging population, several professions, most notably in the health-care sector, will be seeing a demand in labour expansion. Particularly, Manitoba will be in need of more registered nurses.

What direction has this government gone towards in order to proactively address this projection?

Mr. Wishart: So, in—really we try and follow this sort of stuff all the time, and part of our labour market strategy—so we're in touch with the regional health authorities all the time to see what their needs are, and we try to align what we bring in—those that we bring in, in terms of their particular needs. So that would be part of that sort of critical group that we would do that, and then we would follow that. So we could go and search through the expression of interest, for instance.

There have been times when regional health authorities and even private companies have taken delegations or gone to particular countries looking for a particular set of skills. We work with them in regards to that to make that whole process work as well.

But we're also putting a lot of emphasis on the post—with the post-secondaries on bringing students in and trained in that—in those sectors.

And, of course, as you know, we have a long list of institutions that train to nursing of various types, whether it's an RN or an LPN, as part of the process—or psych nurses, in particular. So we work with the post-secondaries a lot to make—to try and develop those types of skill sets.

And, of course, we have a process now in place through MPNP that is specific to students that are trained here in Manitoba to make that whole process go much more seamlessly. We think that that's actually going to help make our institutions even more attractive to foreign students. They're already very attractive to foreign students in a lot of reasons—in a lot of ways, and I think that this will improve on that.

Ms. Lamoureux: And, if I get to the end of my questions, I actually have a couple of questions about the outreach programs you guys have done in the past—or the Provincial Nominee Program has done in the past.

What is this government doing to explore ways in which provincial-regulated bodies can work collectively with Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program in order to create a feasible plan for entry of skilled workers in related occupations that may not be licensed, so that applicants are able to pursue accreditation standards within the province instead of trying to complete the task from overseas.

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

So, as mentioned earlier, we're trying to do more of the pre-arrival permits, and make sure that the courses offered in the country of origin for the individual are recognized. That's one of the responsibilities of the Fairness Commissioner, and they work very closely with the different regulators regards to that. We want to do more of that. We're trying to do more of that. It's a learning process. But everyone sort of ends up better off if we can get that all pre-approved, they can come right into the workplace as quickly and easily as possible. I mentioned, of course, the student process as part of that.

So that would be the two principal areas that we work with regarding—to make sure that we have that and make that work as well as we can.

Ms. Lamoureux: So you talk about still finding the best ways, which is very reasonable.

To what extent has this government considered making amendments to the accreditation process for

internationally educated professionals intending to enter regulated occupations?

Mr. Wishart: Well thank you very much for the question.

When we—work all the time with the regulators in terms of any changes in terms of the standards, we would have to be in very close association with them to do that, and, of course, though they're provincially regulated, there is sort of national standards that they work together to establish. They're not a perfect match. I've certainly run into, in my own case, people that couldn't work here in Manitoba but could work in other provinces because under their regulations, they were allowed to do so. Sometimes it seems cruelly ironic.

What we would—also would do in a case like that is if there was a need for a gap training, we would work with the post-secondary institutions to put specific programs in place to help with that. We certainly want everyone who's come here—in most cases it would be in a situation where we believe they have a certain set of skills. When they get here, if for whatever reason, it doesn't—the regulator doesn't agree with us on that, that's not a win for anyone.

So we would be very—looking very closely at whether we needed to do an upskill situation, and you know, what type of support they would need while that was going on would be something that we would be in discussion with. We—I know that these have occurred in the past, particular courses being offered to help particular groups make that upskill, and we would certainly look at whether we could participate in that. That, too, would be something that we might be funding out of. It's a barrier removal. That's something that we certainly have identified the fee as related to.

*(16:50)

Ms. Lamoureux: I'm happy to hear how open you are to it.

Has the accreditation process become increasingly difficult for international workers who identify their intentions to re-enter regulated occupations to help filter applicants? Is that why?

Mr. Wishart: I'm not sure I understood that question. Could you restate it?

Ms. Lamoureux: Why has the accreditation process become increasingly more difficult for international

workers? Is it to help filter the amount of applicants that we're receiving?

Mr. Wishart: I'm not sure that I entirely agree with the member's pretext here because we actually think it's getting better. You know that we work very closely with the regulators through the office of the Fairness Commissioner. We think we've been able to remove a number of barriers in the process. You know, if the member thinks she has a specific regulator that it's been an issue but we—I would love to hear and we would certainly have that discussion with the Fairness Commissioner. But we're—been working, I know this has been an ongoing process this last year when we did the special review with the regulators and the office of the Fairness Commissioner; that was really the target to try and make sure that we would remove those barriers.

As I said earlier, you know, it's really not a win for anyone when someone comes here and isn't able to do what they thought they were trained to do. It isn't a win for us, that's for sure, here as the province of Manitoba; it isn't a win for them. So we would certainly do our best to make sure that didn't occur.

Ms. Lamoureux: When I talk about it becoming more difficult, I don't necessarily mean that that's a bad thing. But what I'm talking about is, for example, language barriers. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the last time I checked on the website, I believe you needed a minimum of 4.0 just to qualify. Now that used to get a PNP applicant accepted, and that was fine. But now I have constituents who are coming to me and they've received 6.0 on the applications and they're being rejected and that's the reasoning for the rejection.

Is that why—so when I talk about it becoming more difficult to be accepted into the program, is that to filter them out?

Mr. Wishart: Well, and I thank the member for the question. And I hope we can manage to communicate on this.

Certainly, to apply to PNP you need a four absolutely, and it's still people that come with just a four and a certain set of skills. But there are some regulated professions that have raised their standards quite a little bit. Nurses, for instance—I have to assume that's registered nurses—now at seven; that has increased, but that's something that they have done themselves. They have the power to do that. Engineers are a nine. Doctors are a nine.

So you know, certainly those occupations have the right to do that. We certainly want to help anyone that was—would be here or might need additional training to do that. We—I can certainly understand that in some professions the need to have very good communication skills is very important. Especially, I prefer my doctor to understand what I had to say.

Ms. Lamoureux: I can appreciate that.

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

And under the old system that we talked about prior to the expression of interest and how we're doing it now, there was an appeal process that took place, and I gather that's what the member wants to know, what kind of success rate we had for that. And we don't really track that, though we could probably dig some up if the member felt very strongly about that. But under our new system, we don't expect to actually have very many appeals at all. You know, I mentioned that we expect to be well up into the 90s in terms of once we bring people in—expression of interest and ask them for application. We expect a very, very high success rate. That's our goal, I mean, as part of that.

So, if the member wants to know, you know, certainly what the level of success of appeals, it would be historical because it doesn't apply to the current systems anyway.

Ms. Lamoureux: What about moving forward? Is there going to be a certain amount of appeals that are considered for a second round? I know that every Monday night when I go to my McDonald's, and it's consistent, I still receive people coming by and I—that's why I say I am impressed with the backlog being removed. A lot of them are being processed, but now the problem is, well, Cindy, I've been rejected; can I appeal it? I don't want to give my constituents false hope. When they come and bring this issue to me, what would you advise that I be telling them?

Mr. Wishart: There is an appeals process there now in terms of it's available, the procedural fairness application portion. It's available on the website, and they have 30 days—just give me a moment.

And what we've done under the new process, now isn't really an appeal in a sense that we will give you a letter saying we intend to refuse you and here's the reason why, and you have 30 days to dispute the reason. So it's not really an appeal; it's an offer—request for additional information as to why we

wouldn't refuse you. And so that is the process, and then, of course, as the member knows, you can go to the Court of Queen's Bench on that; that still remains. Very few people actually do that, but—and we certainly don't want to push people that way. Under the new process, you'll have sort of a notice of what might be happening or what we intend to do, and you will have the opportunity to provide us with additional information should you have any.

Ms. Lamoureux: I recognize I have, like, maybe 30 seconds left.

Very quick question: How many asylum seekers are not accepted in Manitoba due to criminal records?

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

HEALTH, SENIORS AND ACTIVE LIVING

* (15:30)

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

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

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

Could the minister introduce his staff in attendance?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Joining us again today is the Deputy Minister for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Karen Herd, and our CFO for Finance, Dan Skwarchuk.

Mr. Chairperson: Could the critic introduce her staff member?

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I'd like to introduce Ms. Elimy—Emily Coutts, sorry, our research co-ordinator.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

As previous agreed, questioning for the department will proceed in a global manner, but based on—the questions should be on the same topic so that we—the minister has his—the right staff members in attendance, and the floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Lathlin: I would like to address the—Dr. Peachey's report.

My first question for the Minister of Health, is: What work has the department done so far, or is planning to do, to address Dr. Peachey's recommendation C-02 to expand home-care services to indigenous communities?

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the member for the question that she put forward.

Quite apart from the specifics of Dr. Peachey's report, as she knows, we're implementing significant parts of it in a fashion that will be rolled out over time, recognizing there's great changes happening in the health-care system now—changes that I think will ultimately benefit everyone in the health-care system, long term—but also recognizing that changes can be a challenge and can cause some disruption, and we're not unaware of that.

Generally, we have an increase in this budget, which is being contemplated before the committee today, for home care of \$3.9 million. That increase will be applied in the system generally, but of course, would no doubt include people of indigenous backgrounds and many other Manitobans. So it continues to be a concern for the department in terms of capacity for home care. We know there is an enhanced home-care portion of the clinical changes within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, which will move 1,200 people from hospitals to homes in a year, which we think is certainly important.

The entire discussion around home care is critical. Something that was reported upon by Reg Toews in the sustainability of health care, not just from the service perspective, but also from a worker perspective, and ensuring that there are enough people employed and employable within the home care system is going to be a challenge in the next many years. But there is an increase in funding for home care this year of \$3.9 million, which will, I think, have some effect for different communities. But we don't underestimate the challenges of a sustainable home-care system.

Ms. Lathlin: My next question is: What work has the department done so far, or is planning to do, to address Dr. Peachey's recommendation C-05, to involve indigenous leadership in discussions or plans for indigenous health care?

Mr. Goertzen: In there continue to be a number of different avenues, of course, to ensure that we have

full participation and input in terms of access for indigenous people. I mean, we've heard from—and I think from the member herself—about the need to have representation on the regional health authorities that are reflective of the communities that they represent—not always easy because RHAs are quite large following the amalgamation. So the regions are quite vast and often have vast, different areas and communities of interest contained within them, so getting a reflection on the boards of the communities that are represented in these now quite vast areas isn't easy.

But we are—we've changed the application process for board members of the regional health authority to have an intake that is continuous. We've certainly said to groups and organizations who feel that there should be more representation on the boards of indigenous Manitobans, to please make sure that those applications are brought forward, and they can be brought forward at any time. And then I would extend that offer as well to the member for folks that she might know that are interested in serving on the board.

Also, there continues to be work, although I think it's more specific right now in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in terms of cultural understanding and appropriateness of care. It's more developed in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. We've had some discussions about how that can look in other health authorities, and I think that that is something that is important as well in terms of ensuring that there is that sort of understanding.

Beyond that, of course, we do maintain relationships with a number of different organizations, including AMC as an example, and we're in contact, of course, with the federal officials when it comes to Aboriginal and indigenous health, many other organizations representing Metis, Aboriginal and indigenous people, so there is contact that continues on at an official level to ensure that there is communication between there, but we recognize that that should happen as well on the board level as well.

I was happy to see, although I wasn't able to attend, but I know the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) was able to attend the traditional healing centre in Pine Falls a couple of days ago. We spoke about it, the member for Lac du Bonnet and I did, just a day or so ago, and he indicated it was a tremendous, tremendous opening, and I think the

community was well receptive of the healing centre and the traditional aspects of it that are incorporated there.

So there are a number of different initiatives that are happening and not specific only to the Peachey report, but things that continue to go and happen on an ongoing basis.

Ms. Lathlin: I thank the Minister of Health for the invite to forward recommendations to board members. In fact, I have two in mind that I'd like to forward as soon as possible.

My next question is: What work has the department done so far, or is planning to do, to address Dr. Peachey's recommendation C-07 to help the northern regional health authority make diagnostic and therapeutic services available within indigenous communities?

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the member for the question. Certainly, we know there are a number of different services that continue on. I'm glad to see we continue our relationship with Amdocs. I mean, I've heard good reports in terms of the work that they do in providing medical care to northern and remote communities, and there's been a positive relationship. And we've heard that from those communities who access that service, and I think that that is certainly important.

There's been some discussion, of course, with the federal government about investment dollars that they are looking to place for health-care facilities, whether they are hospitals or something else, in communities.

* (15:40)

One of the things that I'm certainly interested in seeing discussion with the federal government on is dialysis closer to home in facilities that are in northern Manitoba where the infrastructure allows, and that can, I know, be a challenge sometimes, ensuring that the right infrastructure in terms of water and other is also available.

So, you know, we've had some correspondence with the federal government to try to have that discussion, where the federal government is putting in facilities and services, to also ask them to be involved with dialysis closer to home. We've not had specific response on that. But I do think it's something that would improve the lives of many people who are travelling a great distance and spending a great amount of time, often all their time,

away from their home communities. So we would look for some support from the federal government in that as they continue to look for different ways to become engaged in health care in northern communities. But certainly, I would identify the need for dialysis closer to home is an important one where the federal government can play a significant role.

Ms. Lathlin: Has the department transferred funding to the northern regional health authority to achieve this recommendation?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, there is funding that is provided, of course, to the northern regional health authority, as it is provided to all health authorities outside of Winnipeg and of course including Winnipeg.

I know the member's question is particular to the North. There are diagnostic services that are provided in communities such as The Pas, her home community, CT scans, and then also in Thompson. That funding is provided from the provincial government to ensure that those diagnostic tests are performed in northern communities, but it does speak to a larger issue about what role and what involvement we could see from federal officials as they look to be involved in health care for indigenous people.

And I know, in speaking with federal officials, they do express an interest, and so I don't want to dismiss that. I think it's important, but we have not seen sort of specifics in terms of where they're willing to be more involved in diagnostic services or dialysis services, which I think can have a significant impact within those communities. But we continue that dialogue, and I hope that it'll come to fruition in some way that'll have an impact not only on the home community of the member opposite, but other northern communities.

Ms. Lathlin: What work has the department done so far to address Dr. Peachey's recommendation, C-27, to establish an indigenous leadership working group to develop a plan for palliative care in indigenous communities?

Mr. Goertzen: The member raises the issue of palliative care, which is something that I know many Manitobans have raised with me in terms of ensuring that there is better access to palliative care. That's—you know, it's not a topic that's been raised in particular when it comes to the new federal legislation on medical assistance in dying, but it has shone a different light on the need for palliative-care

services in the sense that we want to ensure that folks don't feel—that nobody is put in a position to feel that medical assistance in dying is the only option. Now the Supreme Court of Canada has indicated that it will be an option for Canadians, but we don't want to be in a situation or have people in a situation where they feel they have no other option.

There is very scattered and 'disperated' palliative care services in Manitoba. That has been the case for the past maybe 20 years and maybe more in the province, and I think that that is a concern. One of the things that I was happy to see happen in the last year was the hiring of a palliative care co-ordinator who would be housed in southern but is responsible for developing a province-wide palliative care program to ensure that there are more specific standards that are developed across the entire province. The work of that palliative care co-ordinator began in December of last year, and I think that would be important work in trying to ensure there is some standard or some consistency, not—recognizing that the services will never be equal across a province as vast and as, in some cases, isolated as Manitoba is.

That is always a challenge. It's been a challenge for every government since the province was formed, but trying to ensure that there is some consistency in training and services on palliative care is something that we thought was a priority, and the hiring of a provincial-wide palliative care co-ordinator was certainly a step in that—not in response to Dr. Peachey's report. That step was taken not as a direct correlation to Dr. Peachey's report, but simply because we saw it as a gap that existed.

Ms. Lathlin: What work has the department done so far to address Dr. Peachey's recommendation E-03 to recognize that separate funding streams for indigenous peoples disadvantages indigenous communities and does not lead to equity and reasonable access?

Mr. Goertzen: The member will know or remember that there was indigenous representation on the steering committee for the Peachey report that was commissioned by the former NDP government. That input, of course, was heard through the process of working up the report.

There is ongoing discussions with officials in our department and also with the federal government in terms of how do we ensure that the disparities that exist between communities are addressed as well as possible, recognizing that there are always

challenges in a province as vast and diverse as Manitoba. But working with those officials to try to find a way to get the disparities levelled out is something that is certainly important, and those discussions will continue, but they don't happen in isolation.

There are certainly—there is work in terms of indigenous persons in collaboration with our department, working on health policy, and we know that there are a number of different ways, we hope, that the federal government can engage with the department to level out some of the disparities that exist. It was part of the discussion around the now-infamous discussions on the Canada Health Transfers.

We did have representation from the indigenous community come to the federal-provincial-territorial meeting that happened in Toronto, I believe in October or November of last year. Certainly, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has raised the issue of indigenous health and the importance of indigenous health with the federal government and has done so publicly, as well, to ensure that there was a special focus on that. And, while some may not have appreciated that being raised, there is a reality that we need to ensure that where there is disparity in health outcomes that we try to address those for the people who are involved with those disparities, and so the raising of that issue with the federal government, I think, had some impact. I hope it had some impact in the recent federal budget, which committed to more funding for northern, rural and indigenous health, and I hope that we see some specific results from those announcements and the federal government. But we recognize that the work of the Premier and others in raising the issue at the federal level is important, and I think that he has committed himself to continuing to advocate for those groups and organizations, and I think he'll continue to do that.

* (15:50)

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): How many home-care attendants does the Province currently employ and how many of these are HCA—sorry—how many of these are certified?

Mr. Goertzen: I want to provide to the member a response to a question that he asked at the end of the last Estimates session, which I guess would have been on Monday—and I believe it was this member who asked it. If I—if it wasn't him, if it was the

member for River East (Mrs. Cox) it's not bad for both members to have the information, I suppose.

There were questions about the total number of emergency room visits and the average wait times in the different hospital sites, so I'll provide that on the record now and fulfill that obligation. At Concordia Hospital, and this is between April 1st, 2016 and March 31st, 2017—that's the cohort period that this was examined. So for Concordia Hospital, there were 30,515 visits with an average wait time in the emergency room of 3.07 hours.

At Grace Hospital, it was 30,072 visits with an average wait time of 2.53 hours. HSC adult emergency room, there were 62,201 total visits with an average wait time of 2.41. The HSC Children's Hospital, there was 52,724 emergency room visits with an average wait time of 1.58 hours. Misericordia Health Centre, there were 30,614 visits with an average wait time of 2.61 hours.

Seven Oaks General Hospital, there was 41,472 visits; average wait time, 2.06 hours. St. Boniface General Hospital, there was 42,239 visits with an average wait time of 2.63 hours, and at the Victoria General Hospital, there was 32,056 visits with an average wait time of 2.78 hours. That is wait—when I say wait times, that is wait to be seen, not necessarily wait to be admitted or discharged.

Mr. Wiebe: How many home-care attendants does the Province currently employ and how many of them are certified?

Mr. Goertzen: So HCAs in the Interlake Eastern Regional Health Authority, I'm told there are 214.39, which I'm assuming is a position and not a person. In the Northern Regional Health Authority, there were 95. In the Prairie Mountain Health regional authority, there were 277.275. Again, that 0.275 is a position, not a person. In the Southern Health-Santé Sud Health Authority, 366.88; and in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 1,334.55.

And I'm told that 80 per cent of provincial HCAs are certified, so I'll let the member do the math.

Mr. Wiebe: How many patients are currently enrolled in the home-care program, and how many of these patients are seniors and how many are persons with disabilities?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm advised that there are about 40,000 Manitobans who are served by home care.

Rough breakdown would be that seniors would represent about 75 per cent of the home care clientele, and the remaining 25 per cent would be composed of other individuals, you know, who might be requiring short-term care or are cared for for other medical reasons.

Mr. Wiebe: How much money has the WHRA allocated for their new short-term, intensive home-care program, and how many clients will this program service?

* (16:00)

Mr. Goertzen: I know I've got a lot of paper moving around here.

Officials at the RHA have indicated to us that the enhanced home-care service model, which is part of the clinical changes and the system changes in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, is expected to move 1,200 people from hospital to home every year. It's intended to provide enhanced home care for the elderly through the development of elderly-friendly services within their home communities. The enhanced home care will allow seniors to remain in their homes and continue rehabilitation outside of hospitals and outside of PCH environments.

We've not been provided, from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, their budget figure on that, although I expect there'll be updates from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority on the rollout of the clinical changes within Winnipeg relatively shortly, and there'll be an opportunity for an update at that time.

Mr. Wiebe: So, I guess—can I expect the minister to give that update then, I suppose, when it's available?

Just a question with regards to the name. And so, I'd like to know when and why, I guess, the department dropped the words Manitoba and program from home care.

Mr. Goertzen: Just in terms of the update, the update will come from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. I expect that they'll have an availability in the next few weeks just to give an update on the rollout of the changes that they've proposed from the NDP-commissioned Peachey report. So they'll provide that, and I will answer the minister's question—or, sorry, the member's question shortly.

Mr. Wiebe: When did the department decide to drop the name Manitoba and program from the name of the home-care program and why?

Mr. Goertzen: Right, that was the—the question that I'm about to ask is the one that I committed to answering, just for those who are tracking the various commitments that happen in Estimates.

My understanding is that—then—reason the name change from program to services was it better aligned with the fact that each individual regional health authority provides a group of services in home care. They're not all exactly the same, and that it isn't a province-wide, 'prescribed' program; it is delivered by the regional health authorities, and there's a basket of services that each one provides.

Mr. Wiebe: What was the total cost to update all regional provincial policies, advertisements, information material, anything else that may have been captured with the old name with the correct terminology?

Mr. Goertzen: Just for greater clarity than perhaps provided in—it's because I've—the change of the name was not a direction of government or the minister. There was no ask from government. It never came across my desk in terms of the change.

The change, I understand, happened because in the RHA act it refers to home-care services, not a home-care program. So it was about ensuring that it aligned to what the act said and what was really happening within the individual regional health authorities providing these baskets of service. So it wasn't—it didn't—it was not a direction from the minister's office, nor was it ever approved from the minister's office. It wasn't something that would be within my authority to need to approve, I'm told.

In terms of the costs that were involved, I'm told there are no costs involved. Individual authorities had been told—or asked—to just simply use up whatever material or existing material that already—they already had, and then whenever new material had to be ordered, then the new name would be reflected. We don't believe there's been any advertisement on the change. We're not sure what value that would add to anyone.

And so our understanding, there's been no cost.

Mr. Wiebe: Has the department or any of the regional health authorities explored policy options or explored the possibility of creating home-care user fees? And, if so, what information did they gather

about how much those might be or who they would apply to?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I—you know, I suppose within individual RHAs there are often things that are discussed and explored in terms of programs and sustainability.

You know, we recognize that not everything is consistent when it comes to home care in the province. Those in rural Manitoba, for example, would see that they don't receive all the service that is provided in Winnipeg always when it comes to home care. I think that that may have been a change that happened under the former NDP government.

So there are often things, I suppose, that are discussed, as they would have been under the former government in terms of how programs are delivered and how they operate, you know, but I—it would be difficult for me to predict or to explain what individual regional health authorities may have talked about at sessions or workups or as they were looking for different program areas. But, certainly, I know that, under the former government, there were changes, and, certainly, in rural Manitoba there was some concern about those changes. I often receive letters regarding those changes, concerns about how service was being interpreted or the reduction of services.

You know, there might be questions the member wants to explore about self-managed care. Certainly, I think self-managed care is an important part of the future sustainability of health care. I think there are probably things that we could do better with self-managed or self-directed care when it comes to the home-care system. So those are the questions that I would be happy to explore further.

Mr. Wiebe: So maybe we can just explore them, then, here.

Does the minister believe that costs of the home-care program could be alleviated by implementing user fees or allowing private home-care services?

* (16:10)

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Goertzen: I'd refer the member to the recently completed Toews report. When it comes to home care, it'd be more specific because Mr. Toews has completed a few reports over time, but there certainly, in his report on home care, is a discussion about self-managed care and the importance of

self-managed care. His view, having reviewed the program, is that it is a very positively received program by those families which enroll in self-managed care.

I do believe that there is a possibility to ensure that there is better understanding of the program and Manitobans are more aware of the program, understand that it's available. I'm not sure that every Manitoban who might access home care is always in full understanding that self-managed care is a possibility for them, but, given that Mr. Toews found that there were generally positive feelings about the program for those families who are enrolled in self-managed care, that that is something that I would certainly be interested in promoting as an option, but, of course, home care remains as an option as well.

But it really is about ensuring that people have choices, both in the short and the long term, and it's the sustainability, I think, both when it comes to the workforce and when it comes to client services, is a critical issue, and, when it comes to client service, self-managed care can work to provide both good care but also to deal with the workforce issues. The challenge of ensuring that there is enough individuals who are willing and able to do the job, the important and good job that home-care workers do, is critical. So self-managed care does, I think, play an important role in that, and I am interested in making sure that Manitobans are well aware that it's an option for them, and one, as Mr. Toews says, that often results in very positive outcomes.

Mr. Wiebe: How many people are enrolled in the self—currently in the self- and family-managed care program, and how many home-care recipients also subsidize their care with family caregivers?

Mr. Goertzen: I am advised, Madam Chairperson, that it is 2 per cent of the total clientele of home care, which we indicated before was just over 40,000. So 40,000 times 2 per cent would, I am advised, work out to be about 810, give or take a few.

But certainly, you know, I won't be specific on whether I think that number is too low or too high, but I do think that it is probably not a program that is well understood by families as an option. I sometimes worry that there might be barriers that are artificially put in place for self- and family-managed care. And, you know, I am interested in hearing from those who are experiencing that system to hear if those barriers can be broken down, as well as, you know, other service providers who

provide home-care services. If there's a way that we can meet the sustainability of home care through self- and family-managed care and engaging providers in different ways, then I think, you know, we're interested in doing that.

Mr. Wiebe: On page 35 of the Supplementary Estimates book, can the minister account for the decrease in the provincial jug—drug programs?

* (16:20)

Mr. Goertzen: Thank the member for the question.

The detail on the provincial drug program is on page 43 of the Supplementary Estimates where it would indicate that the operating costs for the program have essentially remained the same other than a reduction in salaries. There's a reduction of staff positions.

The Acting Chairperson (Sarah Guillemard): Before I recognize the member for Concordia, would you please introduce your staff member?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, absolutely. Thank you, Madam Chair. This is Stephen Spence, and I think his title is head research co-ordinator for the opposition caucus, and if it isn't that, it's something close to that. And he's certainly doing good work for us.

So maybe the minister can clarify: Has there been any savings by switching to generic drug brands over—have there been any savings realized over the last year?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, there's been significant savings as a result of generic drugs coming online. I think it's one of the great successes of the council federation work that goes back many years.

In terms of asking provinces to work together in purchasing—and that certainly is one part of the savings—but also finding generic drugs that perform essentially the same medical advantage to patients while not having the same cost as their name-brand equivalents, it's certainly something that has been significant in terms of the success of reducing costs. And that is important because, at the same time, while generic drugs have reduced the costs significantly to all provinces when it comes to Pharmacare, there are many other drugs that are coming online that are quite expensive and specialized drugs, and we think of specialized drugs when it comes to cancer, in particular, are life-saving or life-altering in many ways, but can also be extraordinarily expensive. And so these savings from the generic drugs is certainly important and it

is critical in the system, and there certainly have been significant savings through the generic drug program.

Mr. Wiebe: Have there been any new drugs added to the Pharmacare formulary, I guess, well, I'd say in the last year, and—or there—have there been any drugs removed?

Mr. Goertzen: The formulary is updated quarterly. There certainly have been new drugs that have been added in the last year or replaced other drugs, both determinant by best medical practices and advice and also generic drugs and other drugs that come online at particular times. But the formulary in Manitoba is updated quarterly, so once every three months there is an update to the formulary.

Mr. Wiebe: How is it that the department receives updates from the Common Drug Review? And how do they stay updated on any new drugs going through the review process?

* (16:30)

Mr. Goertzen: So, I will do my best to explain, as I understand it, the process. When a drug manufacturer would apply to have a new drug approved for sale in Canada, that, of course, would go to the federal government, and the federal government would do an examination based on scientific evidence of the drug's safety, its efficacy, its quality for human consumption and that, essentially, the drug is going to do what the manufacturer says it is intended to do for whatever medical reason the drug is being applied. So that happens at the federal level of—as—at first instance, so it's not a provincial responsibility and the Province has no involvement in that.

A notice of compliance is issued by Health Canada that a manufacturer has presented the scientific evidence needed for a product's safety and efficacy and quality as required by food drugs—Food and Drugs Act federally. Once Health Canada has issued the notice of compliance, the NOC, for a drug, then it can be marketed and sold in Canada.

The CDR is sort of a one-stop, a single process for reviewing new drugs and providing—listing recommendations to the participating federal, provincial and territorial drug benefit plans, of which Manitoba is one. And the CDR works in collaboration with participating drug plans and calls consultations. Once it has gone through the CDR process, then the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance can begin discussions with the manufacturer

in relation to price to see if there is an ability to come to terms on price for a particular drug.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

And that sometimes happens and sometimes it doesn't happen. And I—if there is not an agreement on price, then a drug doesn't complete the pharmaceutical alliance process, and that's part of the negotiation.

There are teams that are formed among the provinces and territories to do the negotiation with the drug companies when it comes to pricing, and that process happens for new drugs that are looking to become listed on the provincial formulary.

Mr. Wiebe: How does the department receive formulary-listing recommendations from the Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee, and can the department choose to ignore CDEC recommendations?

Mr. Goertzen: My understanding is that the process is 'advisory,' not prescriptive. So it is provided as advice but it's not binding advice from the CDR to provinces.

Mr. Wiebe: Has the department received a recommendation from the CDC about RU-486, that is, the abortion pill? And will the department be listing that drug under Pharmacare?

Mr. Goertzen: My understanding is—and the member will know that Minister Squires is the lead on this file—but it is my understanding that currently across Canada that particular drug is before the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance pricing group.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we continue, I just want to remind the minister that when he refers to his colleague, he's to refer to the ministerial portfolio but not by the name.

Mr. Wiebe: Does the department believe that the medication is an essential medication?

* (16:40)

Mr. Goertzen: Sorry, I think I missed the question as a result of some amount of background noise.

But I did make a commitment to the member. He asked new drugs that had come on the formulary so the last quarterly report, April 20th, 2017, added the following drugs to the formulary. So this'll remove the obligation to report back to the member: Metadol-D, which is an opioid

dependence drug; Suboxone, which is an opioid dependence drug; Daklinza, related to hepatitis C; Epclusa, which is related to hepatitis C; Xolair, is a chronic idiopathic urticaria; Zepatier, which is related to hepatitis C; Revlimid, which is a first line multiple myeloma medication; Simponi, which deals with UC; also Simponi (New Strength) which deals with UC; Zytiga, which is related to metastatic prostate cancer; Auro-Abacavir, which is an antiviral drug; Auro-Candesartan HCT, which is a hypertensive agent; Auro-Losartan HCT, which is a hypertensive agent; Auro-Telmisartan HCTZ, which is a hypertensive agent; Cholestyramine-Odan is a bile acid sequestrant; Creon Minimicrospheres Micro is a pancreatic enzyme; Euro-Hydrocortisone, which is for 'corticoresteroid'; Mar-Topiramate, MH, which is an epileptic agent; Mint-Gliclazide MR, which is anti-diabetic agent; Mint-Levocarb, a anti-Parkinson's disease agent; Mylan-Buprenorphine, which is an opiate dependent—Teva-Buprenorphine, which is an opiate dependence; Odan-Erythromycin is an antibiotic; Sandoz Diclofenac, which is an anti-inflammatory agent; Auro-Pramipexole, which is an anti-Parkinson's agent; Auro-Rizatriptan—it's a migraine therapy; Med-Moxifloxacin is an antibiotic; NAT-Zolmitriptan is a migraine therapy; Apo-Sildenafil R, which is a hypertensive agent; Levetiracetam which is a 'epileptic' agent; NAT-Levetiracetam, which is an 'epilep' agent; Pms-Sildenafil R, which is a hypertensive agent; Ratio-Sildenafil, which is hyper-intensive agent; and Solifenacin, which is an overactive bladder agent.

That's the last quarter. If the member wants any further quarters, I would prefer, probably, just to table those, and I'd like to, in advance, apologize to Hansard for the great stress that I've no doubt caused them in this recital, and they—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: They—I—they have my full apologies for this and any other difficulties I've put them through. But I'm—I will certainly try to get them a list of the precise spelling of these drugs, and I would ask, for my sake and for others, if the member not ask me for any other quarterly recitals on drugs.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Like to ask the minister whether Concordia Hospital's going to have an ICU, an intensive care unit, under the new emergency services configuration that this minister's proposing.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Chairperson, the Peachey report, which was commissioned under the member's

government recommends that the ICUs be consolidated into three ER facilities, and I think—we don't have Mr. Sussman here; we dismissed him because we didn't know there'd be further questions on the report, but we could certainly ask him to be re-engaged, if the member would like, in future sitting of the Estimates, even though I know he doesn't want to have any future sittings of the Estimates.

The Peachey report recommended that the ICUs be concentrated in the three hospitals that would be having the full-service ERs, and I'm advised medically that would be because you don't have an ICU without an ER.

Mr. Maloway: So, the reason I asked that question was that I've had, like, two inquiries now about this issue. One of them was from a doctor and the doctor was explaining that if the plan is to do hips and knee surgery in that hospital, in those hospital—the hospital environment, then an intensive care unit would be a necessity because in case there was adverse outcomes from an operation involving hip and knee surgery, there has to be an intensive care unit there to resuscitate the patient, I guess, or to take the patient to—or otherwise you would have to take the patient from the operating room directly over to St. Boniface.

So, would he like to comment on that, because this issue was brought up to me by a doctor and by another person, I believe, who was a nurse? So, two independent, separate inquiries on the same subject.

* (16:50)

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I can—we'll take that question, the specifics, because we want to be careful on some of the medical responses. And the WRHA's system alignment, we'll take it under advisement for the member.

But if he has—I mentioned this a couple of days ago—if there are sort of more—a series of questions on how the system specifically will work on a micro-level within the system redesign, we did have Mr. Sussman here for the first couple of days of Estimates. I am certainly willing to have him here for future days and future sessions, if that's helpful to the member. We welcome—we certainly welcome the questions that he has on this but, you know, it would be prudent to have the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority here, so we don't provide him with information that he might use incorrectly.

But also it is important to note that, you know, we'll continue to have updates from the region—we expect one in the next couple of weeks—public updates in terms of the rollout of the different plans, as they continue to work with the planning and the redesign.

But, if he would like for future sessions to have Mr. Sussman here, if there are things that are moving beyond the Estimates books and we're discussing on a global fashion, so that's certainly fair game. But it's difficult to have every person involved in the different regional health authorities sitting here, because it would need a bigger Chamber. But we could certainly ask him to come back if he would like to have those discussions whichever day, if he is interested in having Estimates now.

Mr. Maloway: I think that would be a good idea to have Mr. Sussman back, and I'm assuming that the House leader would be calling Estimates again for tomorrow, but if it's not tomorrow, then certainly the next opportunity.

I mean, I thought it was an important point to try to get resolved, because when you have a doctor actually working in the hospital—one who's been around for a long, long time—you know, not being sure about how they were going—how the system was going to deal with this problem, then I thought it was important to try to get some sort of an answer here.

The fact of the matter is that there will be operations. The minister's plans include—am I correct about this? The minister's plans include having knee and hip surgeries done, having operating rooms operate at Concordia Hospital. Is that true?

Mr. Goertzen: I don't want to diminish the question that the member asked previously, and I don't want him to think that I didn't think it was important; I do think it's important. The issue is more one of sort of operational questions that are brought forward, and I recognize that making statements on operational procedures within a regional health authority simply isn't a wise thing probably for a minister to do in great detail without having the individuals who will be operationalizing those decisions here, which is why we did bring and ask Mr. Sussman to be here for the first several days of Estimates, and we certainly are willing to ask him to attend again if the member provides us that notice.

So the questions are not unimportant, and I don't want to suggest to him that they are not important questions. It's a matter of making sure that the right

folks are here. He will be surprised to know I'm not a medical doctor by profession, but I want to ensure that he has the best information we can provide, and as such, I think it's also important that regular updates be provided by the health authority. And my understanding is that that will happen and there will be another update coming within a couple of weeks so that there can be public discussion about how the plan is being implemented.

The plan, by the way—I know the member indicates it is the minister's plan, that it is my plan—but he will remember full well that in fact the plan was designed by his hand-picked consultant from when he was in government—commissioned by him and hand-picked by his government. And we appreciated the work that was provided by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) in doing that good work.

I don't imagine he wants to take credit for it, which is probably one of the few things that he's chosen not to take credit for, but we do know that he specifically—through his government—commissioned the Peachey report and then hand-selected the consultant.

Mr. Maloway: Well, I guess, then, we'll wait to see—to hear from Mr. Sussman then at tomorrow's session of the Estimates, or Monday's, whichever comes—whichever happens first.

I'd like to also ask the minister about code blue situations. I don't know whether he's familiar with those, but I'm told that currently emergency staff get called into the general hospital, or they get called up from there when there's a heart attack or someone stops breathing in the—one of the 200 or so—180 to 200 beds at Concordia Hospital. And I'm advised by the residents who have convalesced at the hospital that it isn't infrequent, that it happens quite often.

And, in the event of a code blue happening, does the minister in his plans—does he plan to have any emergency staff available? Or will they have to call and wait for an ambulance so that the patient would be then removed from Concordia Hospital and transported to the nearest emergency hospital, which would be St. Boniface?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, the member will know that Dr. Peachey's report, the report that his government commissioned and that he helped hand-select the consultant for—his government did—has a significant section on critical care, and how the alignment of critical care will be, and how there'll be a response to

critical care. And that's not just true, of course, in Winnipeg, but there are many places in Manitoba where critical care is not only important but how one accesses services around critical care is also equally important.

But, in this particular report, there is a significant part of the report that speaks exactly to that and the alignment of critical to ensure that it is being properly provided in the places where it is most critical for it to be provided.

We will endeavour to have Mr. Sussman for further questions around the individual clinical

practices within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority if the member would like, but I would ask, respectfully, that—

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

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F. Marcelino	1878	Taxi Industry Regulation	
Pallister	1878	T. Marcelino	1887
Premier's Schedule		F. Marcelino	1888
Swan	1879	Maloway	1888
Pallister	1879		
Workplace Safety			
Lindsey	1880		
Cullen	1880		

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Committee of Supply
(Concurrent Sections)

Executive Council

Lindsey	1889
Pallister	1889
Swan	1894
Allum	1903

Education and Training

Fontaine	1908
Wishart	1908
Selinger	1919
Lamoureux	1921

Health, Seniors and Active Living

Goertzen	1924
Lathlin	1924
Wiebe	1927
Maloway	1932

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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