

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*

Vol. LXX No. 57 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 24, 2017

ISSN 0542-5492

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 24, 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

Eighth Report

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- May 11, 2017
- May 23, 2017

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Efficiency Manitoba Act/Loi sur la Société pour l'efficacité énergétique au Manitoba*
- **Bill (No. 20)** – *The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act/Loi sur la gouvernance et l'obligation redditionnelle des corporations de la Couronne*

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the May 11, 2017 meeting:

- Mr. ALTEMEYER
- Hon. Mrs. COX
- Mrs. GUILLEMARD
- Ms. KLASSEN
- Mr. MARTIN
- Hon. Mr. MICKLEFIELD
- Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park)
- Mr. NESBITT
- Mr. REYES
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER
- Mr. SELINGER

Your Committee elected Mrs. GUILLEMARD as the Chairperson at the May 11, 2017 meeting

Your Committee elected Mr. MARTIN as the Vice-Chairperson at the May 11, 2017 meeting

Committee membership for the May 23, 2017 meeting:

- Mr. ALTEMEYER
- Mr. BINDLE
- Hon. Mr. EICHLER
- Ms. KLASSEN
- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park)
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER
- Mr. SELINGER
- Mr. SMOOK
- Mr. WOWCHUK

Your Committee elected Mr. SMOOK as the Chairperson at the May 23, 2017 meeting

Your Committee elected Mr. BINDLE as the Vice-Chairperson at the May 23, 2017 meeting

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following six presentations on **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Efficiency Manitoba Act/Loi sur la Société pour l'efficacité énergétique au Manitoba:**

*Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour
Chris Mravinec, CUPE, Local 998*

Dan McInnis, Private Citizen
 Evan Thompson, Private Citizen
 Dr. Garland Laliberte, Bipole III Coalition
 Dennis Woodford, Private Citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following two written submissions on **Bill (No. 19) – The Efficiency Manitoba Act/Loi sur la Société pour l'efficacité énergétique au Manitoba**:

Joe Masi, Association of Manitoba Municipalities
 Tim Sale, Private Citizen

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 19) – The Efficiency Manitoba Act/Loi sur la Société pour l'efficacité énergétique au Manitoba**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 20) – The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act/Loi sur la gouvernance et l'obligation redditionnelle des corporations de la Couronne**

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.

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development

Seventh Report

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee of Social and Economic Development.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Social–

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its Seventh Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 23, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 33) – The Minimum Wage Indexation Act (Employment Standards Code Amended)/Loi sur l'indexation du salaire minimum (modification du Code des normes d'emploi)**

Committee Membership

- Mr. ALLUM
- Hon. Mr. CULLEN
- Hon. Mr. FIELDING
- Mr. HELWER
- Ms. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Mr. NESBITT
- Mr. PIWNIUK
- Mr. YAKIMOSKI (Vice-Chairperson)

Your Committee elected Mr. PIWNIUK as the Chairperson.

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following seventeen presentations on **Bill (No. 33) – The Minimum Wage Indexation Act (Employment Standards Code Amended)/Loi sur l'indexation du salaire minimum (modification du Code des normes d'emploi)**:

James Rilett, Restaurants Canada
 Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour
 Michelle Gawronsky, MGEU – Manitoba Government and General Employees Union
 Bob Moroz, Private Citizen
 Molly McCracken (by leave), Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
 Josh Brandon, Make Poverty History Manitoba
 Jonathan Alward, Canadian Federation of Independent Business
 Darcy Penner, The Canadian Community Economic Development Network
 Lynne Fernandez, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
 Loren Remillard, The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
 Cory Kolt, The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce
 Michael Chin, Private Citizen
 Scott Jocelyn, Manitoba Hotel Association
 Paul McKie, UNIFOR
 Nicole Dvorak, Private Citizen
 Matt McLean, Canadian Union of Public Employees
 Carlos Sosa, Private Citizen

Bill Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 33) – The Minimum Wage Indexation Act (Employment Standards Code Amended)/Loi sur l'indexation du salaire minimum (modification du Code des normes d'emploi)**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment.

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I am pleased to table the Five Year Plan of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba for the period 2017-2021.

Madam Speaker, I'm also pleased to table the annual report for the appeal panel and medical review panel of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba for the 12-month period ending December 31st, 2016.

Madam Speaker, I am also pleased to table the Annual Report for the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba for the 12-month period ending December 31st, 2016, I believe—2016.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Agriculture, and I would note that the required 90 minutes—[interjection]—I would indicate that the required 90-minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable Minister of Ag now please—

4-H's Annual Highway Cleanup

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, on behalf of Manitoba Agriculture and Manitoba Infrastructure, it gives us great pleasure today to inform the House on the 31st annual Manitoba 4-H spring highway cleanup this coming weekend and urge motorists to be extra cautious when travelling Manitoba highways.

Manitoba Agriculture and Manitoba Infrastructure are proud to partner with Manitoba 4-H clubs in this event.

The province-wide campaign will take place on Saturday, May the 27th, weather permitting. In case of rain, the alternate date is June 3rd.

All work areas are supervised by adult volunteers and are marked with safety signs. All 4-H participants will be wearing safety vests and cleanup will take place between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. to help ensure they are most easily visible by motorists.

Last year 28 4-H clubs cleaned 294 kilometres highway, picking up 1,015 bags of garbage, earning \$7,003 for their efforts.

We all benefit from the dedication of these young people as they raise funds for their programs by collecting unsightly trash along our highway. We are pleased to applaud their resourcefulness while earning about civic pride, environmental responsibilities.

Great things can happen when we work together as a team. This is just another example of Manitoba's great teamwork.

We applaud the efforts of our Manitoba 4-H clubs and urge motorists to be extra cautious this coming weekend.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, this coming weekend, 4-H Manitoba will be holding its annual highway cleanup. This initiative is among a number of great initiatives organized by 4-H, an organization that helps teach young people leadership, communication skills and self-confidence.

Our NDP team knows that Manitobans take pride in our beautiful landscape and value clean communities. Last year, just under 2,000 bags of trash were collected and 425 kilometres of roadside were cleaned through 4-H annual cleanup. All plastics, bottles and aluminum cans collected are taken to Manitoba Soft Drink Recycling pickup areas to be reused and recycled.

Madam Speaker, 4-H's annual highway cleanup is an important tradition that brings young—teaches young Manitobans the value of environmental consciousness and community service. These types of initiatives are an integral part of teaching important skills and values like civic engagement, leadership and they have inspired many of today's rural leaders.

In light of 4-H annual weekend cleanup, I ask all Manitobans to drive with extra caution when they're

on the highways this weekend and look out for volunteers wearing safety vests.

On behalf of our NDP caucus, I would like to thank the 4-H volunteers who are taking time to make Manitoba a greener and cleaner place to live. We are proud of these young Manitobans for demonstrating their commitment to their communities and good citizenship. Keep up the great work.

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 ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

* (13:40)

Ms. Klassen: Madam Speaker, 4-H clubs of Manitoba are comprised of thousands of 4-H members and motivated volunteers. It is an international youth and volunteer organization, and it's a program that provides members with the resources and activities to build self-confidence, communication and leadership skills while learning about a topic of their choice.

This will be 4-H's 31st annual highway cleanup fundraising campaign and it has been a key strategy in keeping our ditches clean in rural Manitoba. All work areas are supervised by adult volunteers and clearly marked with safety signs.

The Liberal caucus would also like to caution drivers traveling through these areas to be keenly aware of the volunteers that are on the sides of the highways, picking up garbage.

Many hundreds of kilometres are cleaned every year. Recyclable bottles and cans are also delivered to appropriate pickup locations. It is an important lesson learned from our future Manitoba leaders about community pride and responsibility.

This endeavor teaches 4-H members the value of environmental consciousness and recycling.

The Liberal caucus would like to thank all the volunteers that participate in the annual cleanup and hope to see more initiatives like this in the future. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

La Société historique de Saint-Boniface

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Merci Madame la Présidente. L'histoire de Saint-Boniface et du

Manitoba français est longue et riche. Au moment où le Canada fête son 150^e anniversaire, la Société historique de Saint-Boniface joue un rôle essentiel dans la préservation de l'histoire de notre province et notre pays.

Aujourd'hui, je prends la parole pour reconnaître leur contribution exceptionnelle à l'éducation publique en matière de patrimoine franco-manitobain et métis.

Fondée en 1902, la Société a été établie pour démontrer la contribution et la longue histoire de la présence française de l'Ouest canadien.

De nos jours, la Société continue sa mission, avec un mandat d'acquiescer, promouvoir et préserver le patrimoine des Francophones et métis du Manitoba et dans l'Ouest du Canada.

De bien des façons, cet organisme préserve non seulement les documents et les artefacts, mais la mémoire collective de nos communautés. Aujourd'hui, la Société possède une des plus riches collections archivistiques francophones et métisses dans le pays, y compris plusieurs écrits importants de Louis Riel, le père du Manitoba.

La Société est toujours une riche ressource pour les historiens, mais également pour les Manitobains et Manitobaines qui désirent tracer leurs racines et se renseigner sur leurs ancêtres.

Madame la Présidente, permettez-moi de remercier tout le personnel de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface, qui sont présents parmi nous cet après-midi. Ce n'est pas tous les jours qu'on considère les contributions des historiens, des archivistes et des bibliothécaires.

Par contre, votre travail est indispensable. Bien que la Francophonie manitobaine a beaucoup évolué au cours des années, les gens comme vous nous apprennent qui nous sommes et d'où nous venons.

Merci beaucoup, Madame.

Translation

Thank you, Madame Speaker. The history of St. Boniface and of French Manitoba is rich and long. As Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary, the Société historique de Saint-Boniface plays a vital role in preserving the history of our province and our country.

Today, I rise to recognize the Société's exceptional contribution to public education on Franco-Manitoban and Metis heritage.

Founded in 1902, the Société was established to document the contribution and long history of the French presence in Western Canada.

Nowadays, the Société continues its mission, with the mandate to acquire, promote and preserve the heritage of Francophone and Metis populations in Manitoba and Western Canada.

In many ways, this organization preserves not only documents and artifacts, but also the collective memory of our communities. Today, the Société has one of the richest Francophone and Metis archival collections in the country, including several important writings by Louis Riel, the Father of Manitoba.

The Société is always a rich resource for historians, but also for Manitobans who wish to trace their roots and obtain information about their ancestors.

Madame Speaker, please allow me to thank the entire staff of the Société historique de Saint-Boniface, who are all with us this afternoon. It is not every day that we acknowledge the contributions of historians, archivists and librarians.

However, your work is indispensable. While the Francophone community of Manitoba has evolved significantly over the years, it is people like you who teach us who we are and where we come from.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Pick Up and Walk

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Good Afternoon, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak in the Legislature today about the 12th annual Steinbach Pick Up and Walk which occurred on May 6th.

The Pick Up and Walk is a collaborative effort of 21 churches in the Steinbach area. The contribution of our churches to our province is enormous. They provide social, economic and personal support that cannot be fully measured and they help to relieve many of those that would otherwise turn to government. However, at the Pick Up and Walk, the contribution of the community churches and their members was easy to quantify.

One thousand six hundred and fourteen volunteers met at the T.G. Smith arena in Steinbach and within hours, they removed 9.49 tons of garbage from streets, ditches, parks in our province's third largest city. My wife Kim and son Malachi were honoured to join those volunteers who, wearing their

yellow shirts and rubber boots, fanned out across the city.

While the churches are the driving force behind the annual event, there are many sponsors and supporters who help in providing the lunch that is served after the walk and who help to co-ordinate the pickup of the garbage bags that have been filled. In addition, the City of Steinbach helps to provide facilities and equipment to support the walk. Each of these deserve our thanks.

In particular however, I'd like to recognize Grace Hiebert, the Pick Up and Walk founder and organizer from Southland Church in Steinbach. Grace's initiative has not only helped clean up our city for many years, but it has provided an example to the thousands who have participated or have seen the efforts of community spirit, co-operation and the impact our churches have in the province. Thank you, Grace, for all that you do, and may God continue to bless you in your service.

The Pick Up and Walk is a remarkable community event that allows us to take pride in our city, be good stewards of our environment and come together in fellowship.

Colleagues, please join me in recognizing Pick Up and Walk leader, Grace Hiebert, and her team, Laverne Pappel, Art Dueck, Helen Funk, Ernie Hiebert, Joyce Purchase, Russ Dyck, Eldon Wallman, Edwin Adrian, Sheri Grenier-Rooke, who join us here in the gallery this afternoon.

Frank Watt

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I continue to be honoured to meet constituents who dedicate their time to enhancing the lives of those that they come in contact with. I am pleased to take this opportunity to rise in the House today and recognize the 52-year health-care career of Mr. Frank Watt.

Accompanying a neighbour to visit a patient at the Assiniboine Centre in 1965 created a desire in Frank to help those in need, and he has not turned back since. Due to that first visit, Frank has had a distinguished career in health care, where he started as an orderly.

Frank spent his first 14 years providing care to those in need. He contributed significantly to the health-care industry even though the care he provided was not medical. He spent each shift providing care to his patients in such areas as eating,

dressing and bathing, in both the hospital and other in-patient-care settings. His years of service, reassurance and companionship made a significant difference in the patient experience.

Madam Speaker, when the Assiniboine Centre relocated to its current location, Frank's passion to serve in the health-care sector flourished and grew. His desire and his ability to influence and care for his patients also increased, and he changed his career by becoming an LPN.

I asked Frank the other day what keeps him going for all these years, and he said that he simply puts the needs of the patient first. I've heard many comments about Frank and the way he performs his duties, and I am told that his demeanour and positive attitude, along with his desire to make a difference during a patient's care, makes him a hero to many.

Madam Speaker, Frank is here with us today, along with his family. And I might add that his daughter is—he is a role model, because his daughter is also working in the health-care sector as a nurse practitioner.

Frank's 52 years of commitment to his patients is truly remarkable, and I'm honoured to publicly thank him for his service and recognize his contribution to our province. And I'd ask all of my colleagues to please join me in congratulating Frank on a job well done. Congratulations.

Ramadan

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): Manitoba is blessed to be a diverse province, not only in culture, but in the multitude of religions practised and celebrated.

This Saturday begins Ramadan, one of the holiest months in the Muslim religion. During this time, 1.6 billion people across the world and nearly 15,000 people in Manitoba will be fasting from sunrise to sunset every day. According to Muslim belief, Ramadan is a time for a spiritual detox, a time to purify the soul, refocus attention on God and practise self-discipline. It's also believed that Ramadan was the time when the first revelation of the Islamic holy book, the Quran, occurred to the founder of their faith.

The physical effects of the fast are also a reminder of those who cannot meet their basic needs and encourages those fasting to remember not to be wasteful and feel empathy for others. This is why many Muslims in Manitoba and across the world

donate the money that would have normally been normally have been spent on food to charity.

Another beautiful tradition of Ramadan is the iftar meal. The iftar is the meal served at the end of the day during Ramadan to break the day's fast. Other families—or, often families and communities gather to partake in the iftar meal together. Here in Manitoba, there are many interfaith iftar meals where people of different faiths experience the breaking of fast together.

* (13:50)

The final day of Ramadan is known as Eid al-Fitr, and it is celebrated with prayers and feasts.

Madam Speaker, I would like to wish all Muslims across Manitoba a blessed month of Ramadan. Ramadan Mubarak.

Shoal Lake Airport

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It was the summer of 1992 and Gary Filmon was the premier of Manitoba when the Shoal Lake regional airport officially opened.

However, it was 1988 when a committee of municipal officials and aviation enthusiasts began their efforts to secure a federal grant of nearly \$800,000 to construct a 1,000-metre paved runway, taxiway and terminal building to serve the region.

To mark the opening of the airport in 1992, 431 Air Demonstration Squadron, or as they are more commonly known, the Snowbirds, officially opened the show to thousands of thrilled spectators. As a newspaper owner I was lucky enough to hitch a ride with Snowbird 5, Captain Nick Cassidy, on a media flight from CFB Moose Jaw.

Over the past 25 years I believe Shoal Lake has been one of the busiest rural airports in Manitoba with movements from flight training, agricultural spraying, air ambulance and recreational flying. Several pilots who earned their wings in Shoal Lake have gone on to careers with Air Canada, WestJet and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The Shoal Lake Flying Club is very active with membership from throughout the region.

Approximately a dozen private aircraft are based at the airport located northwest of the town, along with a flight training centre and spray plane operation.

Fast forward to 2017 and Brian Pallister is the Premier of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

The flying club—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Nesbitt: —will mark the 25th anniversary of the Shoal—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the—or remind the member that member's names are not to be used, but their positions. Thank you.

Mr. Nesbitt: The flying club will mark the 25th anniversary of the Shoal Lake Airport with an air show featuring the Snowbirds as the main act on Wednesday, July 12th. This will be the Snowbirds only Manitoba performance in Canada's 150th year. Joining the Snowbirds are Bill Carter in his Pitts Special S2S, who also performed in Shoal Lake in 1992, and Pete McLeod of Red Lake, Ontario, who performs on the Red Bull Air Race circuit.

Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate all those citizens who have been involved in the operation of the Shoal Lake regional airport over the past 25 years and extend an invitation to all Manitobans to attend the air show in my community on July 12th.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery.

First of all, I'll start with the family of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson). We have here his wife, Elaine Watt; Shaunna Watt-Dorscheid, his daughter; Peter Dorscheid, son-in-law; Amanda Dorscheid, granddaughter; Brett Dorscheid, grandson; and Jean Hayward, granddaughter-in-law.

Also in the public gallery, from Rosenort School we have 19 Grade 11 and 12 students under the direction of Arlin Scharfenberg and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin).

And we have seated in the public gallery, from Transcona Collegiate, four students under the direction of Daniel Steinhilber and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski).

And seated in the public gallery, from St. John's-Ravenscourt, 40 Grade 9 students under the direction of Jock Martin and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort-Garry Riverview (Mr. Allum).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Advertising During By-Election Winnipeg Health Authority Campaign

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): We've heard from thousands of Manitobans that disagree with the government's pending closure of ACCESS centres, emergency rooms and urgent-care centre. The government knows this; that's why, on the verge of the election, they put out ads trying to convince the public. The Premier and his Cabinet got caught in violation of election rules, yet took days to address this and the publication is still on the website.

Why is the Premier playing fast and loose with our election laws?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Each of us is entitled to our own opinion, as is the member, but she is not entitled to her own facts, Madam Speaker, and the facts are these: we've got a health-care system that was increasingly posing challenges for Manitobans in terms of their ability to get emergency care, in terms of their ability to receive diagnostic tests, in terms of their ability to get procedures done that needed to be done, and so the system was broken, Madam Speaker. It was not functioning well. It was functioning, in many categories, 10th of 10 provinces, and that is not acceptable.

So, Madam Speaker, the previous government knew this. They had the information upon which to act. They chose not to. We choose to act.

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

Ms. Marcelino: The by-election was called on May 12th. We raised this as an issue on May 17th. It was not until after this that the WRHA reminded its staff about the election rules. The publication's still up on the website, and now we have learned that the TV ad still played over this long weekend.

Why do they continue to violate the election rules?

Mr. Pallister: Having seen the previous administration flaunt the election rules on numerous occasions, Madam Speaker, having seen Cabinet ministers parading around and peacocking, doing announcements, not only prior to the writs but during the writ periods, we understood, going into the new challenges we face and we face together, that there would be a need to demonstrate a new way of doing things and a better way of doing things. We also understand the challenges, and we will address those challenges.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Election rules are rules, and they have to be followed.

Madam Speaker, the Premier promoted his head political—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, the Premier promoted his head political communicator to focus on selling the public on closing emergency rooms. The Premier would have us believe that this is all just a mix-up, but he knew the timing of the election.

He has an obligation to ensure the government is following the election rules. As the Premier has said previously, it would be in the government's best interest to make sure they're not abusing the election rules before, rather than find out they did after.

Why is it always one set of rules for the Premier and another one for everyone else?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's concerns very much, and we are addressing those.

But I do remind members opposite they had rules within their own party which they chose to violate to try to get rid of the previous premier from their own caucus, and this hardly demonstrates an adherence to the rules, Madam Speaker, nor does parading around a birthing centre, as the previous Health minister with the NDP did during an election period, nor does the sad fact that the previous administration has been and is continuing to be under investigation by the Ombudsman of the Province, the Auditor General of the Province. And so the fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, that the member does ask a question about which she and her colleagues are very familiar, and that is breaking the rules.

We will continue to do our utmost to make sure those rules, which they were—which were ignored by the previous administration, are honoured and respected by all, going forward.

Minimum Wage Legislation Poverty Reduction Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Last night, we heard from a packed committee room with labour and poverty advocates advising what a 15-cent minimum wage increase will do for working families: very, very little, Madam Speaker.

Presenters confirm minimum wage earners aren't just students living with their parents. They're seniors, single mothers, full-time workers, and, according to the MGEU 535, many minimum worker—wage earners work for large corporations.

* (14:00)

The Premier has no problem giving tax breaks for wealthy owners of these corporations, but freezes wages for the minimum wage earners who work there and then increases it by a measly three nickels.

The question is, Madam Speaker, why?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the member just makes it up as she goes along. Those are false allegations and she makes these repeatedly. The previous administration did give some tax breaks, certainly, not to Manitobans but to corporations.

We have chosen to take another route. We have chosen to consciously make sure that we give the opportunity for lower income Manitobans to keep more of their hard-earned money.

The previous administration took more of that money away from them by raising the PST, for example, which disproportionately hurt low-income families, which disproportionately placed greater burdens on single parents, on the working poor in our society. They knew they were doing that when they did it, Madam Speaker. They can't—I mean, they can run for office, but they can't run away from the record.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Premier said he doesn't think raising the minimum wage will actually reduce poverty. Michelle Gawronsky from the MGEU actually says, and I quote, employment should be a ticket out of poverty, nothing less.

Last night we heard from Molly McCracken from the CCPA that the Premier's tax 'cuts', that he just noted, for the wealthy will hardly give working Manitobans the break that they need. She stated that low-income earners received only \$16 through Pallister's tax change—the Pallister government's tax changes, but lost \$400 when he froze the minimum wage.

The Premier gave himself a 20 per cent raise and tossed three nickels at low come—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: The member is hardly a Fontaine—our fountain of information, Madam Speaker, when she falsely claims that—she makes claims about salary increases that were not given by this government to its members, but were given by the previous government to theirs.

And so, Madam Speaker, again, everyone's entitled to their own opinion, but the member from St. Johns not entitled to make up her own facts.

Now, we have raised the basic personal exemption and this has assisted in taking many, many—thousands, in fact, of Manitobans right off the tax rolls, Madam Speaker. This, the member falsely categorizes as an aid to the wealthy; it is not, quite the opposite. You know, in Saskatchewan, for example, the previous government failed to address this. People aren't taxed on their earnings until they're thousands of dollars better off than they are in Manitoba.

We're trying to catch up to other provinces. The previous administration caused us to lose ground and, most importantly, they caused us to lose ground among working poor families. That's the families first and foremost we're concerned with helping, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Fontaine: These aren't my facts; they're actually the facts of experts, and so let's hear from Make Poverty History's Josh Brandon, who told the committee last night workers will see their purchasing power decline and will be entrenched in poverty rather than steadily coming out of it. He also affirmed that if Bill 33 had been in place since 1998, minimum wage would be \$7.40. He rightly noted that the Premier's increase to the basic personal exemption only benefits minimum wage workers \$17 per every \$1,000 increase, whereas if

the Premier had agreed to raise the minimum wage by just \$1, it would have earned an extra \$2,000 in Manitobans' pockets.

Can the Premier justify throwing a measly 15 cents at Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, it wasn't that long ago that that small amount of money to the member was a large amount of money to me and my family, and raising the basic personal exemption, which now the members opposite come out in—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —opposition to, is not a small thing. And several thousand dollars of tax-free money in the hands of someone who lives in Yorkton is not in the hands of someone who lives in Swan River or Dauphin. And, Madam Speaker, these are not small things to me and they are not small things to this government.

Now, while the members opposite had the opportunity to stand up and support us when we stood up for seniors and fought for a better Canada Pension Plan, they chose to sit on their hands; and when they had the opportunity to stand up and support us in a—in the struggle for more sustainable health-care support, they stayed quiet and sat on their hands and did nothing.

Now, these are relevant struggles that we need to work together on to improve the lives of Manitobans. I invite the members to get on the right side of helping the downtrodden in our society, because that is our focus on this side of the House.

Efficiency Manitoba Act Request to Withdraw

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I'm still struggling with the events from last night, when it—so many people opposed the government's efforts to rip up Hydro. The member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) was in fine form, fighting against his own government.

Has the Minister for Crown Services had time to reflect on what his own member is saying? Will he withdraw Bill 19?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, the previous administration dug a giant hole for Manitobans, Madam Speaker. They dug and they kept on digging, and then they asked for permission in the last

election to add to the shovel work and dig even deeper. They dug our provincial government into a greater debt, a doubled debt from what it had been just eight years before, did the like for Manitoba Hydro and now they blame us for the problem they created.

But, Madam Speaker, our concern is not with us; it's with Manitobans, the real owners of Manitoba Hydro. And the difference that we'll take in our approach with respect to our public utilities is to make sure that they're run in the best interests of all Manitobans, not politically.

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

Mr. Marcelino: The minister has decided he does not want to hear anyone else's voice except his own. More presenters arrived at committee yesterday, yet the lone voice against allowing them to present was the minister. Many people are concerned about this bill, including the member from Assiniboia.

Why is the minister not using his hearing aid?

Mr. Pallister: I'm as bemused as the members opposite concerning the question, Madam Speaker, but not as bemused as Manitobans were as they watched the previous administration proceed, against all advice from within Manitoba Hydro, from former Manitoba Hydro senior managers, from scientists and experts who said, don't build a bipole line halfway around the province at billions of dollars of extra expense; it will push hydro rates up. They proceeded to do so anyway.

They then circumvented the Public Utilities Board process which is designed to protect Manitobans, Madam Speaker. They disrespected the process. We respect the process.

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

Mr. Marcelino: Participants at yesterday's proceedings in committee enjoyed a bizarre spectacle of a government minister filibustering his own legislation. This is the same minister who called Hydro bankrupt and won't withdraw the term even though its financial position is improving.

It seems clear—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Marcelino: It seems clear the minister does not know what he is talking about.

Will he just withdraw Bill 19 and listen to a member of his caucus?

Mr. Pallister: As to the specific issue, Madam Speaker, the member raised in his first preamble, the issue of an arm's-length agency to protect Manitoba consumers from higher hydro bills, that was the No. 1 point of the previous administration, as I recall, an NDP administration, in their green plan.

They promised that they would enact that which we are enacting. They had all the information and recommendations from experts who told them it was the right thing to do and a good idea. They said it was the right thing to do and a good idea; now they've changed their minds.

*(14:10)

Madam Speaker, one thing is clear when it comes to the NDP running Hydro or anything else. People like Ed Schreyer know they shouldn't be in charge and have said so. That's a former NDP premier of our province. A former minister in charge of Hydro, Tim Sale, says they can't be trusted with Hydro management; he is quite right, as well. Former member, rest his soul, Len Evans said the same thing.

Madam Speaker, the NDP is hardly unified when it comes to their positions around Hydro but, more importantly, they are also hardly consistent in their positions.

Government Air Services Privatization Inquiry

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to direct a question to the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

For reasons this government refuses to share with Manitobans, it's trying to privatize government air services, including Lifeflight and our water bomber fleet. Lifeflight provides life-saving services for Manitobans who are sick and in distress across our province. Water bombers protect our communities against the real and dangerous threat of fires.

Why is this government committed to privatizing a core public service which protects the health and safety of Manitobans?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): The department has put out an expression of interest to see whether there is interest

to—we can save Manitoba taxpayers' money while keeping Manitobans safe. I don't know why the member would be opposed to saving Manitoba taxpayers money, but, apparently, that's his position.

Our position is to be prudent with taxpayers' dollars in all cases.

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

Mr. Maloway: Well, Madam Speaker, the government's expression of interest to privatize this service already closed on May 18th. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) said in the last election we'll keep the public services public. So they've broken their word to Manitobans by their shameless attempt to privatize government air services.

I'd like to ask the Premier: How many responses to his expression of interest did he get?

Mr. Pedersen: Well, I'm glad to see the member actually realizes the process. The process on the expressions of interest have closed. They are about to be reviewed by the department. They have not been reviewed yet, and we will make our decision based on what those expressions of interest show us.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Elmwood, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Maloway: The minister didn't answer the question. I asked him how many—how many—expressions of interest there were, and he didn't answer that.

The Lifeflight Air Ambulance saves lives. Over 500 Manitobans have been transported on Lifeflight Air Ambulance since last May when this government came to power. That's 500 trips that saved lives, 500 patients who didn't have to worry if a private owner would charge fees or be available off-hours.

Lifeflight Air Ambulance is a core government service and this government has no right to privatize it.

Will this Premier stop selling off our front-line services to the highest bidder?

Mr. Pedersen: I notice that the member did not want to talk about the untendered STARS contract that the previous government put out just before the last election. I repeat: it was not tendered. There was no

expression of interest; they just awarded a contract. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: This is about getting value for Manitoba taxpayers, and I would remind the member that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen:—while they were in government they also ignored the FleetNet emergency response system to the tune where it's going to cost this government upwards of four to five hundred million dollars, that they ignored for years and years, and they should have looked at that back when they were in government.

Concordia Hospital ER Services Request to Reconsider Closure

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Since this government announced the closure of both the ER and an urgent-care centre at Concordia Hospital, the community has jumped into action. Families across northeast Winnipeg have signed petitions. They've held rallies. They've put signs in their lawns and they've joined with health-care workers to protest this government's cuts to emergency care.

I have thousands of petitions signed in my office, flooding in every single day, and I know that I'm not alone. They come from community members who care so passionately about this they're going out on their own, knocking on doors and collecting signatures on foot.

Will the Minister of Health tell the people of northeast Winnipeg that he's listening to them and that he's willing to reconsider his cuts to the Concordia emergency room?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, we have listened to Manitobans, of course, during the election campaign and since then about the fact that they wait for hours, hundreds of thousands of hours collectively, in emergency rooms and can't get care. That is not service. People who go to an emergency room deserve to have—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen:—service. The Peachey report which was commissioned by the NDP—the hand-picked consultant picked by the NDP—was about providing better care. Better care in the right place at the right time, that's what we'll deliver, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the phone in my constituency office is ringing off the hook every single day, and I know I'm not alone in that. I've spoken with outraged families. I've spoken to seniors in all constituencies all over Winnipeg, and they're calling their own MLAs as well: in Radisson, in Rossmere, in Transcona, in River East. I'm sure these members have communicated that to the minister as well.

Will this minister listen not just to me, but—and not just to the residents, but listen to members of his own Cabinet and his own caucus who must be pleading with the minister to simply keep the hospital open and accessible to the public?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, for many years, Manitobans called NDP MLAs and said, fix those wait times in emergency rooms. They called over and over, year after year, and the NDP did nothing. They did nothing to fix the problems in the emergency rooms. They waited for two hours, five hours, eight hours, 10 hours—no change—and the NDP, those members, never answered the call.

Now, I would ask those members why they didn't answer the call, but most of them were rightfully defeated in the last election, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, despite the bluster, I haven't heard the minister say no to reconsidering the cuts at Concordia. So I hope that means that there is, in fact, a chance that he'll reverse these cuts or he'll scale them back at Concordia.

The community has worked so very hard to make their opinions known to the minister and stand up against these cuts. I know they're not ready to give up on this fight, and I'm certainly not either. This is not a left issue or a right issue; it's a community issue, and his own constituents and his own party members are telling him to reconsider. The community is trying to stay hopeful and that it's not too late for the minister to change his mind to save our ER.

Will the minister give some hope to the community and tell them there's still a chance to save the Concordia emergency room?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member is right about one thing. It's not a left or a right issue. It is a patient-care issue. It is about ensuring—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: It is about ensuring that when somebody goes to an emergency room they get the right care, they get it at the right place and they get it at the right time. That is not happening in the system now. It hasn't happened for the last 17 years under the previous NDP government.

The member asked whether or not there is hope. There is hope on the way. There is hope for a better ER system, a better urgent-care system, a better health-care system and real care when people need it. That is the definition of hope, Madam Speaker.

Poverty Reduction Plan Government Intention

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Last night we heard from Manitobans at committee on Bill 33 regarding minimum wage. I want to thank the presenters for coming out and educating us.

* (14:20)

We heard from both sides, some in favour and some adamantly against the bill. But everyone agreed that the issue of poverty in Manitoba desperately needs to be addressed.

So, Madam Speaker, if this government isn't significantly raising minimum wage, what are they doing to help end poverty in our province?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. Clearly, in our consultations with Manitobans, they asked for a balanced approach. We think this particular bill does bring balance to this minimum wage discussion and debate. It certainly provides the predictability, both to the business community and to employees.

This, clearly, with the indexing model, it certainly protects purchasing power for employees, and I think it really does bring balance to the minimum wage discussion.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this government needs to have more confidence in Manitobans and how they spend their money.

Last night we asked two presenters, both private citizens who were making minimum wage, what they would do if, hypothetically, minimum wage went up significantly. One said the money would go towards her education, and another said he would use the money towards groceries.

Madam Speaker, if this government is not going to raise minimum wage by more than 15 cents, are they still planning to remove the 1 per cent PST that they committed to?

Mr. Cullen: I do appreciate the question relative to poverty.

Certainly, we're taking steps on this side of the House to increase the basic personal exemption. Now, we recognize from discussions last night, we're \$7,000 difference between Manitoba and Saskatchewan in terms of where people start paying tax. We've increased the basic personal exemption. We've taken over 2,000 Manitobans off the tax roll already, and we plan to continue to increase the basic personal exemption, which allows Manitobans to keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Last night there was a young woman who really impressed the committee. She's a grade 12 student working part-time at minimum wage. She shared with us that if it wasn't for the financial support of her parents, she would not be able to attend university next year. This is a huge red flag, Madam Speaker. A young, bright, impressive student who works as she studies could have been prevented from attending university due to the mismanagement of money from this government.

Madam Speaker, during the election, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said poverty would be his No. 1 priority, so where's his so-called poverty reduction plan?

Mr. Cullen: And we—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —we clearly recognize poverty is an issue, and it's certainly an issue that we inherited from the previous government. Certainly, we know that minimum wage is a step in the direction—the right direction, and one letter said it will make a difference to the large number of working women and men in my community and you can keep

surprising me like this. Of course, I'd like a bigger increase, but it's not an ideological issue. Sel Burrows, former NDP supporter.

Madam Speaker, there's a lot of work to do. We recognize when the NDP brought in the increase in the provincial sales tax, there was an increase of 2.4 per cent use in food banks in Manitoba. This government will reduce the PST.

MMIWG Inquiry Preparation for Inquiry

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Our government has been working to ensure that Manitoba is supporting the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This means that we have taken real action to mobilize our resources and to engage with the national inquiry to ensure that the Manitoba perspective is heard and included.

Can the minister of Indigenous Relations update this House on how Manitoba continues working to support the national inquiry?

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): And I'd like to thank my colleague for that very important and timely question. As she knows, our government has been hard at work on this file, and it's a priority within my department.

We passed an order-in-council immediately, and we advocated to have past Manitoba evidence included and we also provided key documents to ensure that Manitoba perspective was heard.

We're listening to the concerns about the inquiry from victim family members and that's why the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) and myself, along with our staff, have advocated to the commissioners to ensure that their concerns are acted on.

Our government will continue working to ensure that the inquiry and its outcomes are representative of and meaningful to—of survivors, family members and the larger indigenous community.

Age and Opportunity Funding Cuts to Program

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, yesterday, in question period the Minister of Justice had no answer why she cancelled all of her department's support for the SafetyAid program

delivered by Age and Opportunity, which gives seniors safety and security in their homes. Without any consultation at all, the Department of Justice wrote to Age and Opportunity earlier this month to advise that the funding for the program, for the crime-prevention program, will end in July.

Will the Minister of Justice agree to sit down with Age and Opportunity to explain her decision and to listen to their reasons why this program must be continued?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): We want to ensure the safety of seniors inside their homes. We want to ensure the safety of seniors outside of their homes and in their communities, and that's why we're—we've been working with law enforcement. That's why we've been working with organizations like Block by Block to ensure that our communities are safer.

So we will take a collaborative approach with respect to this. I am open to having discussions with anyone who wants to further the safety of all Manitobans, including our seniors.

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

Mr. Swan: Cutting the SafetyAid program is exact opposite of making things safer for seniors.

The CEO of Age and Opportunity, Amanda Macrae, told the media yesterday her organization was entirely taken by surprise by the cut, and she says she hopes there's a chance to speak to the Minister of Justice about the way the program benefits Manitoba seniors.

She said, and I quote: We would like the opportunity to understand maybe why the cut has been made and work with government to look at some solutions.

Will this minister actually sit down with Age and Opportunity, learn about the program and see how it can continue for the benefit and the safety of Manitoba seniors?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I want to thank the member for the question. And certainly, as I mentioned in my last answer to this question, that we're willing to sit down with any—with all Manitobans who are willing to work with us to ensure the safety of all Manitobans within our communities. That includes seniors.

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

Mr. Swan: Age and Opportunity has also been trying to get an answer from the Department of Health for funding about the falls assessment and falls prevention, which has been part of the SafetyAid program. While it's unclear how the SafetyAid program can continue without support from Justice, I understand they've not been given any word on the continuation of support from Health.

Can the Minister of Health and Seniors give Age and Opportunity and Manitoba seniors some comfort today and confirm that at the very least his department will continue to fund the SafetyAid program as in recent years?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, our government is focused on yielding results for Manitobans, especially when it becomes—when it comes to health and safety of Manitobans. And that's why we've taken many initiatives by working with various stakeholders in the community, including law enforcement, including members of organizations within the health-care field. And we will continue to do so to ensure the safety of all Manitobans, including seniors.

Split Lake and Gillam Highway 280 Closure

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Since Friday, Highway 280, the only road connecting Gillam and Split Lake to Thompson, has been closed. While other people were enjoying their long weekend, people in Gillam and Split Lake faced interrupted deliveries for groceries and medication.

Can the Minister for Infrastructure tell the House what he's done to restore access to necessities for people in these northern communities?

*(14:30)

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Infrastructure): I thank the member for that question because it gives me the opportunity to thank the staff at Manitoba Infrastructure who spent their long weekend repairing various washouts and culverts that were taken out by flood waters over the holiday weekend. While many of us were enjoying the weather here, our staff was hard at work.

I can tell the member that Highway 280 has been reopened as of this morning.

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

Ms. Lathlin: Writing about this situation, the CBC quotes a Gillam local who says that no maintenance repair was done on the road this spring. Normally, by May a fresh layer of gravel is applied to the surface of the road, but that apparently didn't happen this year.

Can the Minister for Infrastructure explain to the House why that didn't happen?

Mr. Pedersen: Perhaps it's a factor of weather. The spring break has just begun in northern Manitoba. As our member from Thompson can well relate to everyone, it's been a late spring thaw there. They had a record amount of snow and the water has just begun—or, the snow has just begun to melt and the water's just begun to run.

It's pretty hard to do maintenance until the spring breakup actually happens.

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

Ms. Lathlin: People in Split Lake say that Highway 280, a gravel highway, is in such rough shape that people are often stranded and vehicles are damaged.

Ultimately, people in Split Lake and Gillam would like a paved road connecting the community to Thompson. It's a much needed investment that I'm sure the member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle) can get behind.

Will the Minister for Infrastructure commit to providing northern people with this much needed investment?

Mr. Pedersen: Madam Speaker, after a decade or more of ignoring our roads across Manitoba, in fact, the previous member for Thompson went to Split Lake and promised that they would pave the road, when he had no intention of ever doing that.

Instead of putting up steady growth signs all over the place, perhaps the previous government should have actually maintained roads instead of cutting back the maintenance budget year after year after year.

Waste Water Infrastructure New Capital Projects

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I was pleased to see the Minister of Indigenous and Municipal

Relations announce the funding of several water and waste water infrastructure projects, particularly the lagoon upgrade planning and design project in my riding of La Verendrye.

I know that the Rural Municipality of Stuartburn has been keen to see this project funded.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I thank my colleague for that great question.

Our \$1.7-billion infrastructure plan is amongst the highest total infrastructure expenditures in Manitoba history and we will continue to invest strategically. That includes water and waste water infrastructure projects which are critical to foster sustainable economic growth and safe, healthy communities for Manitobans to live and to work.

This is just one of 24 water and waste water projects that will soon begin, representing over \$38 million in new capital spending.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to deliver strategic infrastructure investments that make a real difference in the lives of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): No. No, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto.

Neighbourhoods Alive! Funding

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Since 2001, the Neighbourhoods Alive! program has supported stronger neighbourhoods and communities in Manitoba.

(2) Neighbourhoods Alive! uses a community-led development model that partners with neighbourhood renewal corporations on projects that aim to revitalize communities.

(3) Neighbourhoods Alive! and the neighbourhood renewal corporations it supports have played a vital and important role in revitalizing many neighbourhoods in Manitoba through community-driven solutions, including: employment and training, education and recreation, safety and crime prevention, and housing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order.

Mr. Swan: —and physical improvements.

(4) Neighbourhoods Alive! now serves 13 neighbourhood renewal corporations across Manitoba, which have developed expertise in engaging with their local residents and determining the priorities of their communities.

(5) The provincial government's previous investments into Neighbourhoods Alive! have been bolstered by community and corporate donations as well as essential support from community volunteers, small businesses and local agencies.

(6) Late in 2016, the minister responsible for the Neighbourhoods Alive! program said new funding for initiatives was paused, and that the future of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program was being reviewed, bringing hundreds of community projects to a standstill.

(7) Neighbourhood renewal corporations and their communities are concerned this funding freeze is the first step in a slow phase-out of the Neighbourhoods Alive! grant program, which would have severe, negative impacts on families and communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to support the Neighbourhoods Alive! program and the communities served by neighbourhood renewal corporations by continuing to provide consistent core funding for existing neighbourhood renewal corporations and enhancing the public funding available for specific initiatives.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

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 Manitoba 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.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

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.

* (14:40)

(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. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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) The regulations that had 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 the 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 Manitobans.

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.

And this petition was signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

* (15:00)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Executive Council. The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Chair, there is a well-known principle within government administration known as the duty to document. It is a foundational principle. It requires offices of the government, such as ministers' offices, to ensure that the actions of government are recorded or documented.

I would like to ask the Premier through you: Is he familiar with this principle? And, if so, is he heeding this principle?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Thank you to the member. I just—I had undertaken to give a couple of questions' answers, and I've got the information the member had asked me at the last sitting, so I'll just do that first, if I could.

First of all, the number of government employees and the vacancy rate within the civil service was asked. On this one, I would say I would thank the—well, the clerk, actually, and staff for attempting to compile this information, because it's—it wasn't easy. It's a large organization, and so there was a lot of work involved, but—and also partly because the staffing levels are so dynamic, right, because you have—depends somewhat on the—there's some seasonal workers, as well. So it depends on the time of year. That the member from Flin Flon knows about fires in the North is an example. That would just be one example we're—

So I'm going to get the best numbers I can based on—and there's also people who take leaves, which confuses it a little bit, as well. Sometimes there are term positions; some are starting, some are ending. So I give you—my colleagues this as examples of some of the variables that make it tricky to just go, well, it's this number versus this number because it kind of depends on variables like that. That being said, as of March 31st of this year, 14,000—better just—be sure—162 was the number of individuals employed by the Manitoba government.

Now, the member also asked me about the turnover rate for the fiscal year '16-17. This, of course, refers to retirements or resignations and also would include in that number term positions that have expired. So, in that period of fiscal 2016-17, the turnover rate was 7.7 per cent.

Now, of course, part of this—and I believe this is higher than it was, you know, 10, 20 years ago—is because of the demographic reality of an aging workforce. We—we're—like all of—well, much of the world, we're—the baby boom is working its way through—so-called baby boom. So there are many people who are approaching retirement, more so than was the case in the past, which makes it all the more important that as a government we are very conscious of making sure that we're recruiting people, that we have a quality workplace, that we have challenging careers for people that will allow them to find—find some job satisfaction, find their potential, if you will, in the workforce working for government. And so that recruiting aspect is especially critical when you have a higher turnover rate.

The second question the member had asked me about was political staff, and the question was: Can the Premier provide us a list of all political staff employed by core government departments presently seconded from other organizations or agencies and indicate in which departments they work, the organizations from which they are seconded and their respective salaries. And the response there was easier: there are no political staff employed by core government departments presently seconded from other organizations or agencies.

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for that response to our previous question, and would like to ask the Premier for a copy of—if we're able to ask you for a copy of those figures, although it's in Hansard. *[interjection]* Okay, that's fine.

An Honourable Member: I can re-read them.

Ms. Marcelino: No, no, no, no. Okay, we'll just look it in Hansard.

Now, Mr. Chair, I'd like the response to my first question, please.

Mr. Pallister: Sure, well, I've been given the rules and I want to read those into the record because I think this is what the member's asking.

Now, these are the actual instructions, I would say, from the Government Records Office, the

Archives of Manitoba. The record-keeping guidance that is given for ministers, last updated January this year, it says: reliable records are needed by Cabinet ministers to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Records provide important evidence of actions taken, decisions made, allow government to account for its actions. Ultimately, these records will form part of Manitoba's archival heritage.

Under The Archives and Recordkeeping Act, the Archives of Manitoba is responsible for central records, management, policy, guidance and processes. Ministers offices, like all government offices, are responsible for use of the policies and processes to ensure that records are effectively created and managed. The purpose of this guidance is to assist ministers and their staff with the management of ministers' office records. It is intended to help ministers' offices understand their record-keeping obligations and avoid two serious risks, which are the failure to document the actions and loss of records due to a failure in record-keeping processes or from unauthorized destruction.

Records in ministers' offices: Two distinct categories of records are found in ministers' offices: one, personal constituency and caucus records. Records compiled as part of the minister's constituency, caucus work, personal activities, are not government records under The Archives and Recordkeeping Act, and the requirements and obligations for managing ministers' office records do not apply. These personal records should be kept separately from the minister's office records. They may be removed from the office as the minister sees fit. If the minister wishes, they may be donated to the Archives of Manitoba by private agreement. And there's information on the Archives of Manitoba website if members are interested in that.

All other records in ministers' offices belong to the second category, which is ministers' office records, and that's the focus of the guidance here. So, category two, ministers' office records: These include all records made or received in the course of carrying out portfolio responsibilities and in the minister's role as a member of Cabinet. Ministers' office records, whether in paper, electronic or any other form, are government records subject to Archives and Recordkeeping Act.

The term minister's office includes my office, all ministers, assistants to ministers as well, ministers' office staff. It's important to note there is no separate category of political records that falls outside the

scope of the ministers' office records. Records created by special assistants or other political staff when carrying out activities of the minister's office are government records and must be managed as part of the minister's office records.

The minister's office records typically include records of the activities of the minister relating to departmental operations, policy development and delivery, intergovernmental relations, stakeholder relations and other activities of government, all correspondence sent and received by the minister's office about departmental business as well, records pertaining to the minister's involvement in Cabinet or any of its committees, records relating to public communications and issues and management—issues-management activities—I'm sorry—records relating to administrative functions such as human resources, financial management, ministerial travel and expenses.

Published material, it should be noted, is not a record, and other reference material that might be common to every minister's office is not considered a record, so they're not, like—in the old days, you'd see a phone book, right? You know, stuff that everybody uses in their office is not considered to be a record.

Record-keeping requirements: This section outlines the principal obligations and requirements for creating and managing ministers' office records. Ministers' offices must be aware of, and in compliance with, record-keeping legislation, policies and standards. They should ensure that all staff understand the requirements, that appropriate responsibility is assigned and that records-management activities are monitored.

Creating records: It is expected that ministers' offices will create full and accurate records of all actions, decisions and other activities related to the official business of the office. Full documentation is needed for continuity and effective government administration. It also enables government to account for its actions not just to the public under freedom of information laws, but also to the Legislature, auditor—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry to interrupt. I was thinking of last night. The—or the First Minister's time is up.

* (15:10)

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister). That's very informative, knowing that all that—those documents have to be kept. Records keeping or duty to document helps ensure continuity within

government decision making and helps promote effective decision-making processes.

Mr. Chair, does the Premier agree that the duty to document is an important principle which ought to govern the records-keeping activities of government offices, including the Executive Council?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I'm reading these rules into the record. They are government record advice or guidance. And all of us, I think, endeavour to follow the guidance that we are given to some degree.

I note with interest, though, we are talking about some issues currently before the—in the public interest—not enough at this committee, but elsewhere—like, for example, how to reduce wait times for Manitobans for health care where advice was given to the previous government, expert advice was given but not followed, not taken, also not disclosed, in fact. The reports were made, like the Peachey report to government that would have been instrumental, if adopted and acted upon, in moving us towards shorter wait times, at least according to the expert analysis of the people that the previous government put enough faith in to hire.

And so, following advice from experts is important. I'm not suggesting that every government must always follow the advice of all experts consulted; that's not what I mean. And I understand if there are reasons why the previous government failed to follow, for example, Mr. Peachey's advice or the advice of expert financial advisers, in the case of taxation or in the case of medical—Manitoba medical professionals who were acting as advisory people to the previous government that the previous government may not have wanted to follow that advice. But I've yet to hear an argument as to why they didn't want to shorten wait times. I have yet to hear an argument as to why they did not wish to act on the advice, which was invested in and paid for by Manitobans. And I have not yet heard an explanation as to why the reports were covered up.

This is not only true of health-care advice from experts but also true of advice that was solicited in respect of managing Hydro.

And so the expert who was commissioned, Mr. Philippe Dunsky, who was commissioned to give the previous government advice and to give the Public Utilities Board advice, in fact, as an expert adviser around the issues of demand-side management or how to lower hydro bills for Manitobans going forward, which is an important

issue, given the amazing amount of debt that's been incurred in Manitoba Hydro—yet to hear an explanation as to why Mr. Dunsky's advice was not followed or adhered to.

It was—his advice was to set up a separate, arm's-length demand-side management agency that would, in his estimation, work better than the so-called Power Smart operations within Hydro, that his research showed that—and it was presented at the Public Utilities Board, some of it, but an additional detailed report was covered up. And his advice was clear, that a separate, demand-side management agency could well work better, and he would recommend that.

Now, the previous government said they would do that. They—their position 1 of the climate-change strategy they outlined was—their position was clear, that they would make this demand-side management agency separate and that it would work better; that was No. 1 in the green plan of the previous government.

We now are—we have a bill which we've advanced to do what the previous government was advised to do and said they would do; they did not do it, and we're proposing to do it. We think it's especially important to try to do everything we can to help Manitobans pay—you know, get better value from their hydro investment and to have a sustainable hydro operation.

So, you know, following the advice of experts is something that we think is very often an excellent idea. It seems now that the government—the former government in opposition is taking a position against something which they previously were for, and that would be the separate, arm's-length demand-side management agency.

So the member asks about advice from experts. I would say there's some evidence, at least coming forward now, that the previous administration may have used taxpayer money to consult with experts but didn't necessarily follow their advice when it came to Hydro or shortened wait times.

Ms. Marcelino: The question we're asking of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is related to records keeping, duty to document. And along that line of questioning we have this issue of the use of private communications, be it email or phone, and the issue of security, transparency and accountability.

Mr. Chair, can the Premier explain how the use of private email or phone system is a secure form of

communication or can he provide—in general terms without going into specifics—the nature of the advice he has received on this matter?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I appreciate the member's questions about security because it is really important.

We've seen in—just in recent days, we've seen this attempt by dishonourable people to try to disrupt the operations of governments and disrupt the operations of private companies and so on by injecting viruses into their, you know—what's it called—it's not called blackmail, but they're trying—*[interjection]* ransomware. Ransomware—to try and extricate money from public agencies to heal the system which they themselves made sick. Like, this is just really dangerous behaviour.

And so I come from a background in the private sector of being very, very—as does the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway)—of being very, very careful about protecting data and protecting information that's entrusted to us, and I take that really seriously. So, when I started in this job a year or so ago, I was very concerned that we do our utmost to make sure that the information that we're dealing with is—as much as possible—protected, knowing that there are people out there who would abuse. I'm not, of course, not referring to members of the Legislature in this. I'm saying there are people out there who would maliciously try to—well, just the University of Calgary is an example. I understand they actually paid the ransom to get their—get the programs back going. I think it was two years ago. So that's really concerning to me because we deal here, in government—as the member knows as a former Cabinet minister—we're dealing with a lot of very, very important information that deserves to be safeguarded.

And so, in early days, I did have discussion with folks who have—I claim no expertise on this—but people who have expertise on this just to say, how should we be dealing with issues around information handling and so on. And my clerk has undertaken to glean, now, from sources that we won't disclose, I suppose, today, but sources with expertise on this issue how we can not just carry on with the previous practices, but enhance them and strengthen them to make sure we're doing everything we can to protect information that should be protected.

And so that has been my concern and priority from the get-go, and I know it's a concern shared by, certainly, by all government members. I expect by all

members of the Legislature, who would not want to see leaks or information come out.

* (15:20)

Even now, I mean, with this new book out that former Cabinet minister has written, I'm very concerned in some respects about it. I think it's—I forget what it's called—stories that shouldn't be told, or something like that. But it contains, I'm told already, references to discussions that happened among former members of the Privy Council. [*interjection*] Yes, *Stories Best Left Untold*, and for those of us who are concerned about confidentiality and security of information, these are stories left best untold, some of them, because some of them relate to discussions around Cabinet, some of them relate to discussions around Treasury Board. That's—that might a source of some amusement or adventure to some, but it's a source of concern to me because these are to be confidential discussions. When members in a Cabinet or a caucus have—share points of view, they should be secure in the knowledge that they're protected in that and that's how you build a stronger caucus, that's how you build a more effective organization.

So I'm concerned when I hear that former Cabinet ministers are abusing Cabinet secrecy rules because they don't apply just when they're in Cabinet. They apply when they leave Cabinet and they apply when they leave politics and they should not be spoken about. And so I—the former member for St. Johns may be placing his desire for activities in retirement ahead of his desire for respect from those of us who value confidentiality and respect Cabinet secrecy.

Ms. Marcelino: We appreciate the issue of security of communications, but we also want to ensure transparency, accountability and integrity of official communications.

When FIPPA'd for the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) official communications while he was away on vacation, and at that time that was close to or around the time when budget is being done, we thought, while he was away on vacation. There was no record of communication from email or phone.

We were just asking the Premier: He—does he think private email or phone system is a secure form of communication and should be the way to communicate officially?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I think one should utilize systems that are not only transparent, but also

effective at guarding against the leakage or loss of confidentiality and security. We place these concerns very high; that's why I have asked the clerk to give me suggestions and recommendations on how the system can be strengthened. There is no reason to believe that personal or government—one is stronger or more secure than the other. That's not the issue here. I think the issue is how do we make all communications more secure and so that's what we're endeavouring to do.

At the same time, and I understand the—some of the concerns—not of these members but of others—are, you know, the frequency of communication and so on. That's—I've already put all that on the record so I don't know—I don't see the reason to—necessity to repeat all those things again.

But, certainly, I'm concerned about making sure that, you know, important work is done in a secure way, and I think that's really the focus of where we're trying to move because the people who would make mischief of information or try to drill into information of a confidential nature apparently don't sleep. They're always looking for ways to get that information or to interfere with communications and data, and so I'm—I want to be sure that we're ahead of them, not behind them, whenever possible.

On the confidence issues, I wanted to just to share with the members why Cabinet confidence matters because I think sometimes we—perhaps we don't understand that this a 'tenet' of a stable government. We saw with the previous government what happened. The member was not a ring leader in it, but she saw what happened to the government, and she's referenced budget making and the budget-making period. Throughout the budget-making period in 2014 and '15, the previous government wasn't engaged in budget making; they were engaged in an internal rebellion. They were engaged in a process, some of them—at least six, five Cabinet ministers and another member—publicly attacking their leader. This served as a disservice to those who understand the importance of focus, the importance of focusing on what matters to Manitobans.

Budget-making processes were under way, and yet Cabinet ministers, in the middle of that budget-making process, stepped aside from their portfolios, walked away from them and left new ministers in place to oversee that process, coming in, in some cases, with virtually no knowledge of the portfolio, and it's no wonder that the budget

projections were so far off. What actually happened, they weren't even remotely close to what happened at the end of the year, as the member knows: hundreds of millions of dollars off, no significant progress in terms of things like reducing wasteful expenditure, overlap, duplication in government because, well, the people in charge of the portfolios were just in charge of them partway through the process.

And all of them were, to some degree or another, engaged in things like lining up delegates to support this or that candidate. They weren't engaged in trying to achieve the goals that satisfy the needs for Manitobans to have stronger financial futures or better health care, more accessible sooner, to invest in the things that matter to Manitobans. These weren't the—these weren't principal focus of the members; they were distracted.

So how did that come about? Well, partly because of a loss of confidence, some would say, in the leader. I would say, at least in part, because of a lack of confidence in the people who would organize a rebellion two and a half years into a mandate. The NDP were given the strongest mandate in their history, and the leader should have been respected, in my estimation, and I said that to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), and I mean it, and he was disrespected by his own colleagues who organized a rebellion against him, causing incredible damage to their political party—the least of my concerns—but, more importantly, to the people of Manitoba, by neglecting the priorities they were hired to address.

So Cabinet confidence matters, and in my next opportunity, I will explain why it matters because I think all members should consider—rather than going to a book signing, they should consider not honouring that kind of conduct, which is a disservice to Cabinet confidence.

Ms. Marcelino: I appreciate the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) comments and his views of what happened in the past. We have all learned from it and we have moved on. Now we are in this position, and we're grateful for this position, and we want to do our best as members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

So we're wondering, and accountability, transparency, integrity of ministers' communication, including of the Premier, is a public—or is a Manitoba's concern—of concern to Manitobans.

So we'd like to know the Premier's use of private communication, if he considers that secure, and does that aid in promoting transparency, accountability and integrity of communications? And also, is the Premier still, after all these issues have been raised, still using private communication instead of official communication?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, I'd have to remind the member that the communication that I do is all focused on working for the people of Manitoba. It's not focused on garnering delegates for the next leadership review. I don't choose to focus on trying to recruit other members of our team to rebel against other members of our team. These are the—these were the principal activities of the NDP for months.

* (15:30)

I also pay all my communication when I am away. Six business days this calendar year is the total amount of time. Any communication I've done I've pledged to not have the taxpayers pay a nickel for it, unlike the promise of the previous NDP administration when they said that Manitobans wouldn't pay a penny for the bipole line, which we now know to be at least a couple of billion dollars off. I have kept my promise.

So the member uses the word integrity, but I attempt in—as best as I possibly can—to demonstrate that rather than talk about it. I would also say to the member that we have reduced by almost half the level of political staff in my office, so—the payroll under the previous premier was \$8 million, and it's \$4.3 million now. And I would say that demonstrates integrity in the sense that I am not using taxpayers' dollars to inflate the number of my staff. That being said, I also know that the previous government invested taxpayers' dollars in leadership campaign staff. As does the member.

And so they seconded—and this is, I think, maybe the origin of the question about secondments—the previous government seconded numerous people from—principally from public sector union leadership positions to come in and work for them, corresponding in large part to the leadership campaign of the incumbent leader, positioning people like Heather Grant-Jury in their office, paying her out of taxpayers' money coinciding exactly—no one in that position before the leadership campaign was called and announced, no one in that position after it concluded. Exactly coinciding. Exactly coinciding with the leadership campaign. A staffer is

brought in—Heather Grant-Jury, in this case—paid by taxpayers to work in the premier's office.

Now, was there new work suddenly in that exact time period that was not to do with the leadership contest that Ms. Grant-Jury was hired to do? Because no one has claimed that. Not one person within the NDP organization or elsewhere. So the previous administration hired union staff to work on the taxpayer dime during the leadership campaign.

So—you know, I give those as just two examples. The member appears concerned about whether I—you know, how many texts I sent while I was working with my colleagues to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new government, or how many emails or how many phone calls in the six business days I was away this year. And this fixation is only of mild interest, I think, to people who care about the future of the province of Manitoba. What most people care about, I think, are issues germane to them and not a National Enquirer-type things. That being said, one thing is certain: we're working as a unified team. And I appreciate the member's comments about accepting and accepting with honour, because she's an honourable person, and I always had affection for her since I've had the chance to get to know her. But she is trying to do her best at the role that she's been given, and that's good. That's—and so am I. So am I.

Ms. Marcelino: Still, I'm not clarified—I'm not getting any clarity on the question of official communication using personal email or phone devices. But I'd like—in the interest of time, I'd like to ask another question.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government are presently conducting a review of the FIPPA act. Mr. Chair, will the Premier commit that any changes to FIPPA ensure that all the communications of the President of the Executive Council and his staff, regardless of the mechanisms used, remains within the scope of this act?

Mr. Pallister: I'm very excited about making FIPPA less restrictive in its applications so that more records are released. I think that that is a worthy goal.

I remember the investigation that occurred—I believe the Ombudsman looked at the withholding of records, and this is a problem because, frankly, I don't think—I'll paraphrase the Ombudsman's findings, but the Ombudsman said there was no plausible explanation as to how a government document that contradicted the official government

position around Christine Melnick's knowledge and the premier's office's knowledge of a political protest rally being organized by the minister's—at the minister's direction. The Ombudsman's conclusion was there was no plausible explanation as to why that government document, which proved that knowledge existed in the premier's office, was withheld from the media and withheld from the opposition. That's the kind of thing I don't like to see happen. I don't think anyone who respects the role of the fifth estate should want to see that happen. That's the kind of thing, I think, that deserves to be revealed.

Certainly, there are issues of Cabinet secrecy and Cabinet confidence, and those are legitimate, I think, if not abused. But, at the same time, when I asked questions of the previous administration concerning the purchase of Tiger Dams, I was given the comment that this was ministerial—this was subject to ministerial protection. And we were asking questions that—of documents that should have been disclosed under, not just the freedom of information legislation, but under Finance legislation, should have been disclosed. Untendered contracts required to be disclosed, and they were not only not disclosed—on the Legislative Library computer is where, at that time, was the only place you could get those untendered contracts. It was supposed to be listed on there, and they were not, and I'm here, I'm talking about these Tiger Dams purchases. There was a series of them, half a dozen or more untendered contracts let year after year after year, never put on the listing as untendered.

So how do you deal with that with FIPPA? That's the kind of thing we're trying to figure out so that we can make sure this type of thing doesn't happen again, because if you're going to issue an untendered contract, make it public and explain it. That's transparency. That's not what happened under the previous government's term of office.

So, on the Christine Melnick situation, the Ombudsman said there was no plausible explanation as to how that could have been—that document could have been withheld—document was a copy of an email directly from, if I recall correctly, from the minister's office, Ms. Melnick's office, to the premier's office, so proof—proving that the knowledge was in both offices, and the full assurance should have been given to people that that was the case, but it was not; it was covered up. This is the Ombudsman saying this.

Now, this is the type of thing that we want to—we do not—we want to learn from. We don't want to—this type of thing to happen again, because, clearly, I think it denigrates the respect that all of us want Manitobans to have for this institution and the people who work in it.

The comments of Mr. Mackintosh in respect of the Tiger Dams contracts, the untendered nature of them, are going to be public. They'll be reported on. What he is verifying is that this was part of the reason for the rebellion in the first place among NDP Cabinet ministers. He's verifying that there were repeated efforts by Steve Ashton to make these untendered contracts happen, that he was rejected by members of Treasury Board, many of whom were part of the rebellion—Jennifer Howard, Theresa Oswald, Stan Struthers—and he was rejected, yet he kept pushing and kept trying to get these untendered contracts given to his pal. Now, if you're going to give an untendered contract, you better have a better reason for it than that someone is your pal. That's not a good reason.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Just a couple of things I want to follow up before we move on. In a previous answer, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) had said something that led me to believe that perhaps the government has contracted or hired a security adviser on issues like—

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable First Minister.

* (15:40)

Mr. Pallister: Just to be clear for the member from Flin Flon, no—consulted with some knowledgeable people—no, bill—just that that was just an early discussion, early days discussion that we had, but now the Clerk of the Executive Council is leading the research into how we can make the system work better.

So, just to clarify for the member, no, it's not an outside private outfit. We're starting by taking a look at a variety of things. I think we'll be looking at, among other things, getting a sample of what other governments are doing right now in terms of protecting their security, because I think this is a concern as well at the federal government level and in other provinces, to see if we can't learn from what their practices are, what are they looking at doing. There may even be some real good opportunities for us to benefit from seeing, you know, what other jurisdictions are doing in respect of getting ahead of

these people who would try to abuse the trust of others.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the Premier for clarifying my possible misunderstanding of his answer.

So he's had some discussions with people about security issues, particularly in relation to types of communication: email, phones. So my question, then, is: Is what security protocols, I guess, has the Premier got in place now, seeing as, apparently, it would appear, at least, that you're—he's not using his government-issued cellphone or email accounts when he's out of the country?

Mr. Pallister: Well, we're using the same types of protocols and practices that the previous government was advised on and we'll continue to, but what I'm talking about here is upgrading them to try to get—and I think there's going to be an opportunity for all members of the Legislature to have discussion on that. I think this is an important issue. None of us wants to get, you know, see important information, whether it might be health data which is deeply personal to people; it might be financial data; it shouldn't get out. You know, we should be protecting it.

At the same time, when members are having discussion with one another—or, in fact, with constituents—these are often—not always—but often, very, very personal discussions. And so, as I've shared with the member before, having advised people on personal and having learned a lot—on personal issues over a number of years and having learned a lot about them, I wanted them to know they could trust me to protect that information and make sure that it didn't go to someone it wasn't supposed to go to.

So I take this very seriously and we're doing our best to investigate ways to make the systems we all use work even better.

I'll just finish up, if I could, on the record-keeping things. I was almost at the end, there, but there is some other advice that they give on managing paper. It said: Ministers' offices should be aware of the creation of records in multiple formats—paper and electronic—using separate applications, paper-based file systems, email services and correspondence tracking systems present special record-keeping challenges. Regardless of format, the complete records of each activity or issue and of the office's ongoing activities as a whole need to be managed comprehensively to

ensure that records are kept and remain accessible for as long as required. Since the tracking system used by ministers' offices aims—may contain records that are not duplicated in a paper file system as well as descriptive and tracking information needed to understand and access ministers' records, these electronic records are an essential part of the minister's office records and must be managed accordingly. Office procedures for creating, filing and tracking paper and electronic records should be established to ensure that records of each activity are maintained together or persistently linked so they can be accessed and viewed, and to enable the full set of records to be retained and disposed of as required by the record schedules for ministers' office records. Since ministers' offices have common record-keeping requirements, use of standardized procedures is recommended.

Now, you'll note—members will note from all this advice that there is nowhere here any mention of security. There's no reference whatsoever in any of the information I've read to security and this is part of my concern. So the member asked what protocols I'm following. Well, I'm following the protocols of previous governments, but it's not good enough because there's not, in my mind, sufficient attention being paid in this guidance document to protecting the security and integrity of the information from encroachment or interference by those who might mean mischief. I don't want to sound paranoid, but we've just seen—in the last few days and weeks—we've just seen evidence enough, I think, to give concern—or a higher—an elevated concern to the need to make sure that we're doing everything we can to protect information.

So, again, I say to the member, yes, certainly, you know, there's information that we want to make available to the public. There's also information that should not be made available to anyone because it's confidential information. And that has to be protected, as do records of data that we accumulate over time through government agencies. These are not things that should be made available to others who might mean harm or abuse the information when they get it.

Mr. Chairperson: The member for Rossmere would like the floor for a second.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Yes, just as the time is 4:40—sorry—3:46 or so, I believe there's previous agreement to seek a

recess to—from about 4 to 4:30, maybe a few minutes before 4 o'clock 'til about 4:30.

Mr. Pallister: What I'd prefer, because I don't know how long this next meeting's going to go, and I don't want members to be inconvenienced by that, and I don't want to walk out of a meeting partway through it, so what I'd prefer is to—if I could go as close to 4:00 as I possibly can, not be late, and then that'd be it. I might be able to get back, but I don't like members having to sit here for—and then it ends up my meeting goes 'til 5 to 5 or something. That's no good for the use of time of members here, if that's okay with the members.

Mr. Chairperson: So, I have a—*[interjection]* Is the committee in favour of recessing at approximately 3:55, and if the Premier (Mr. Pallister) happens to be back here before 5 o'clock, we can continue with the Estimates. If not, the committee will be deemed risen at that time of 5 o'clock. All agreed? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Pallister: Yes, I just—I was going to elaborate a little bit on this issue of—because we're addressing—or the members are addressing communications records, and that's fine, but what they're also not addressing is the use of taxpayers' resources for non-publicly beneficial things. And so I wanted to re-emphasize that I take very seriously the stewardship aspects of not spending money that is entrusted to me and our government for personal items or for personal things. That's why I made the commitment whenever I'm away, and including the six business days I've been away this year, that if I incur any costs, they're not to be given to the taxpayer.

* (15:50)

This is the opposite of what happened under the previous administration. I referenced Heather Grant-Jury. I believe we were talking about—I could be wrong on the exact number, but I think it was a \$134,000-a-year position that she was hired into, coinciding directly with the leadership campaign. Now, this wasn't paid for by the premier personally—the former premier. It wasn't paid for by the New Democratic Party; it was paid for by taxpayers. And now that's an issue that didn't get a lot of attention at the time or since, but it got my attention because I just don't think that's right. I don't think that—I don't think politicians should be using, in a leadership campaign—like, I'm sure the member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux) is not using taxpayers' resources to run her leadership campaign. I expect the member

for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) would not do that, but that was done—that was done by a sitting premier, and that's not appropriate.

I also could reference, in addition, a hiring which coincided with that same time period, a secondment, a new principal secretary. Mr. Paul McKie is a Unifor labour staff rep—good for him. He's brought on board right around the time that Liam Martin was shown the door. He comes on and he's hired. What's he hired to do? What's his job description? That's—apparently the media FIPPA'd for that, and they couldn't get the job description—coincides, though, with the leadership campaign—salary for that one, over \$100,000 a year.

These are expenses that were incurred coincidental to a leadership campaign, and yet, you know, the taxpayers of Manitoba pay the bill, but they don't get the value for the work that's done because the work that was done doesn't pertain to them. It pertains to hanging on to the contested leadership. Now, there's wrongdoing there.

I—as I've said earlier, pretty clearly, I don't have much admiration for those who rebelled against the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) when he was the leader, and that's—you know, I'm just one Manitoban who values unity and understands the importance when you're elected to government of working for the people, not working against them, so maybe my opinion's not shared by some. I know it wouldn't be shared by some of the rebel organizers of the Halloween rebellion. That being said, there is no doubt whatsoever that the cost to Manitobans would very likely be in the tens of millions of dollars at the very least, just in terms of the lost opportunities to find savings which the previous government committed to doing, which it did not do, just in terms of the additional deficits that were incurred and grew through that fiscal year, as a consequence of a lack of oversight and prudent, focused management.

And I would say the other damage that would have been done would be to the trust of Manitobans who would want to believe their government was focused not on themselves and their own restructuring, but more that they were focused on the things that mattered to Manitobans.

And so this—their constant line of questioning—I'm happy to continue taking questions, but not satisfied that these questions concerning phone records or email records are as relevant to Manitobans who are concerned with things like health care, education, infrastructure, the plight of

the murdered and missing women, the circumstances around poverty, the circumstances around people trying to find child care, communities concerned that their children are being taken away from their community by Child and Family Services. These are all pertinent issues that matter, frankly, deeply to many Manitobans, but we're spending hours on these issues instead.

Mr. Lindsey: I agree with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in one sense, that I think we've spent a lot of hours on this that could have been spent more productively talking about other things, if only we'd have got a straightforward answer to the questions earlier on.

So I'll ask one last time and if you don't have time to answer today, then perhaps, you know, you can think about it and get back to us.

But, if you're looking at some new security protocols or systems to protect emails and phone calls, people are concerned and it's not just us politicians. It's people in the public are concerned about what you've done presently—how you've communicated, who you—not—maybe not necessarily directly who, but how you've communicated, what type of security you've used. I'm sure you read the paper, watch the news. Hillary Clinton in the US was in big trouble for using private server. There's some question about the Trump administration and their ties to Russia and security, and Brad Wall has been in trouble in Saskatchewan for using private emails and things of that nature.

So the people of Manitoba, quite rightfully, have a concern and really deserve a simple, straightforward answer to so what are we doing today. What are you doing today? What systems are you using that will be available if someone wants to FIPPA those communications at some point in time, as should be available or allowed?

Mr. Chairperson: The hour is 3:55—the honourable First Minister.

Mr. Pallister: Sure. That's a fair question. Yes, I'm endeavouring to strengthen the mechanisms that I inherited, make them better than they were before, make sure that we get as much information as we possibly can out, but I would have to emphasize this to the member—*[interjection]* Am I being heckled now by—oh, thank you. I would have to emphasize this—the member would have to ask this question: during the rebellion, the media would have maybe been able to get access to all of the phone call

numbers that were made from various ministerial offices. What percentage of those would have been made not out of a desire to help Manitobans have shorter wait times, but out of a desire to get delegates lined up for a leadership race? Hard to say. Impossible to say, right? See, just disclosing that you used government email doesn't mean you're pure as a driven snow, does it, right?

So it's—I want the member to understand I appreciate the greater intent of his question and the member for Logan's (Ms. Marcelino) question, but I need them to understand I am dedicated to making sure that our government doesn't abuse the trust of taxpayers. When you had a rebellion in the middle of your term and a leadership contest ensues, five members of Cabinet quit. Rookie members come in and they're in charge of portfolios never been in charge of before, for the most part. The missed opportunities are in to the tens of millions of dollars right there. Deficits run up to double what was projected. Now that's a serious issue on the heels of tax hikes, the largest in Manitoba's modern history that were promised they wouldn't be invoked, to the tune of half a billion dollars a year going off the kitchen tables of Manitobans. And the best that we can get here for hours on end is a question about how many texts, emails I send in the six business days that I'm away from Manitoba? You got to ask yourself: If you're really concerned about providing a quality of opposition that is becoming of the opposition, is this the best you can do?

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 3:57, as previously agreed, committee will recess.

The committee recessed at 3:58 p.m.

FINANCE

* (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 considerations of the Estimates of the Department of Finance. As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Don't we all look spiffy this afternoon.

I have just a few general questions recognizing early on that the dollar amounts and what is being done with them probably falls within other departments. I'm the environment critic, so I'm

mostly just trying to figure out which department I would be asking the more specific questions of. So I'm hoping you can give me some guidance on that front.

So starting with ALUS, the Alternative Land Use survey—or—Services program, if the government were to have put some money into this program this year, which department would have those funds? To provide a little bit more context, this is a program that our government started which provides a subsidy to rural landowners to retain wetlands and other environmental services on their properties.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for Wolseley for the question. It's actually bringing up a humorous memory that I have. Because I could recall one time, as the critic, going to the Finance Estimates, and I was told by that Finance minister at the time—it might've been Mr. Dewar from Selkirk. He says that answer can only be sought at Executive Council, and the next day I went to see the premier at the time and he gave the answer—that said—that answer can only be sought by Finance. Then I told him what I was just told. We had a good laugh about it and then eventually I got the information supplied. So sometimes I know it can be of a fishing expedition to get to the right committee to the critic.

In this case, I would suggest to the member for Wolseley, the best place to get the answer for his question would be actually with the Minister for—responsible for Sustainable Development when those—when that Committee of Supply is heard.

I know, looking at page 123 of the Estimates of Expenditure under Sustainable Development, there is that area particular to drainage and water rights, licences in there, some other subcategory areas, water stewardship initiatives and things. And our government is undertaking changes.

I'm familiar with the alternate land use program. It's a program that has had good results, could be made much better, but it's very, very necessary, especially, as we know in this province, after a period of time, year after year, of significant weather events. It's important to recognize that our approaches to water management have to be inclusive of both large-scale infrastructure approaches, but also our ability to hold back water to provide the necessary or the advantageous conditions in which producers and landowners can be incentivized or encouraged to hold back water,

because we know in many cases, it's not the amount of water that we had heading downhill; it is the—it's not just a question of volume, it's also a question of when it's heading downhill.

So we're very interested in this program. I know that the minister has been doing important work on this, important stakeholder work, as well, in terms of outreach and getting that good conversation going. I would also make the point of saying this issue continues to be important to us on an interjurisdictional level as well. And we know at an intergovernmental level, we continue to engage Saskatchewan on this because watersheds are no respecters of provincial borders or international borders. And so we know that that conversation must be effective and, over time, we plan to get results and to put into place protections that will benefit Manitoba producers, Manitoba First Nations, Manitoba citizens living in communities that have been in the past exposed to significant water events.

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

On a similar—trying to avoid the scenario that the minister had to go through in his previous life. Well, the ghosts in the building are alive with us today. The City of Winnipeg North End Sewage Treatment Plant upgrade: that will be one of the largest capital projects ever done in Winnipeg—by the City of Winnipeg, perhaps even the largest, depending on where the final budget figure lands.

Where would—I guess the first question is: Is the Province contributing money to the City for that project this fiscal year? And, if so, which department would that be falling under? I would assume either Infrastructure or Municipal Relations, but I figured you'd know that.

Mr. Friesen: So, to the member's question, he's asking a question about the City of Winnipeg waste water facility, and he's correct in saying it's a very significant infrastructure undertaking, and of course he would have to go to the Minister responsible for Indigenous and Municipal Relations in order to have a conversation about that infrastructure project and other specific infrastructure projects, whether related to clean water or waste water treatment and conveyance, those kinds of projects.

He will be aware, however, that our government has already announced in this year two separate phases of waste water funding to various projects around the province. Those projects have been

publicly announced. And of course now we're in a blackout period, but those projects were announced in two tranches previous to the blackout. And so he is welcome to look those up to see the very significant investment that our province is making in a collaborative way with the federal government, and of course with municipal government as well.

We know that we have great need for the right kind of investment here, and so we're making that investment. Nevertheless, when the Committee of Supply for Indigenous and Municipal Relations is under way, he'll be able to direct that question and others like it to that minister who has that responsibility.

Mr. Altemeyer: How much did the government budget in carbon-tax revenue for this year?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) for the question. Now, of course, if he wants specific questions answered, he has to approach the minister responsible, and that would be the Minister responsible for Sustainable Development.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this committee, I can, on a high level, indicate that the issue of carbon pricing is very important for this government. We have been clear from the outset as a new government that it's important to get this right. We have said that we favour a made-in-Manitoba approach as part of our climate action plan. We have indicated that it's necessary to do adequate consultation within our jurisdiction in order to understand what this will mean when it is enacted.

*(15:10)

We know that the current federal Liberal government is pushing hard on carbon pricing in all jurisdictions, and we see a variety of approaches across Canada. We have said there needs to be a recognition by everyone that in our economy there are certain key sectors that would be exposed unduly to the effect of a carbon-pricing mechanism should it not be designed with adequate care.

So we need to take the right approach to make sure that we are acknowledging, and I think about—as an example, the issue of agriculture and carbon pricing, and agriculture doesn't have that opportunity to push cost on to someone else. Essentially, agriculture producers are carbon takers and we need to acknowledge that exposure in the industry. Now, I know in other jurisdictions there have been ways to acknowledge agriculture and other key sectors of the

economy. And, of course, in Manitoba, agriculture is a key part of our economy and we saw that last year. Last year was another significant production year. This year, right now, at this time, we're hearing a lot of our producers saying that seeding is nearing completion as a result of a number of weeks of relatively dry conditions. Now, you wouldn't have known that from this last Victoria weekend. So whereas some urban Manitobans would complain that the weather conditions weren't favourable, farmers were happy to have the moisture this weekend.

So we know that we need to take real steps to address climate change. We know that for years under the NDP there was a lot of rhetoric, but there was also a lot of failure to deliver, a real failure to launch when it came to a climate plan. They missed every emission target that they had established.

But let us be clear that we do not accept the approach that the federal government is taken—taking in respect of its approaching the provinces, setting in its 2017 budget a backstop, a provision whereby they would force or enact a carbon price for any province that did not proceed on a schedule that was acceptable to the federal government. I know that in my very first meeting with Minister Morneau, he made clear that Manitoba had better get on board very early. And I explained in that meeting that Manitoba will do its part, but there needs to be that acknowledgement of those areas of our economy that are exposed.

However, I do note as well that in the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) most recent statements on this issue, he has also indicated very clearly that there needs to be also accounting taken of the manner and form in which we procure our energy needs. Manitoba Hydro is gleam—green and clean, and that commitment to hydroelectric power generation must be acknowledged by those who are bringing a plan—who are in Ottawa contemplating the plan.

So we're seeing now that the federal government has put more meat on the bone when it comes to their provisions about backstop. Nevertheless, we will take the time to get this right, do the consultation, and we look forward in conveying to Manitobans—our carbon pricing mechanism that we will be bringing in this year. Nevertheless, the member should know that we have not made provisions in this budget year for any revenue on carbon pricing.

Mr. Altemeyer: So, just so I understand clearly, the minister said there's no budget line in his department or, presumably, in Sustainable Development, for carbon tax revenues this year. Did I understand that part correctly?

Mr. Friesen: So this allows me to continue to give the response. When I was talking about acknowledgements that must be made by policy-makers at the federal level when it comes to the Manitoba situation, there are other acknowledgements that actually should also be made.

One of them should be—now, if I go back to the issue of agriculture, and we recognize that it's not the only industry exposed, but if you take the issue of agriculture, you have to look at the way the industry has changed even in the last 10, 15 years and, you know, I know that members for the—like the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) understands a lot about agriculture. And he understands even when it comes to things like the machinery that's now used, and you think about the—how efficiencies and even emissions-control technology have been priced into new machinery. Essentially, I've heard experts from companies like John Deere say that you're pricing \$30,000, \$40,000 in on a new engine but you could almost claim that—or it could be even higher than \$40,000, but, essentially, there's technology in place that one could argue makes the air coming out of the combine or tractor cleaner than the air going into the combine. Now that might be a bit of a stretch, but—incredible advances in technology.

Now, we must understand that there is a cost built in. We must understand that an ag producer is incurring that cost on purchase of that technology. Some of that technology is only five years in place in the marketplace. That has an effect that should be taken into account.

But, even if we go to our natural environment, we think about the boreal forest—huge, vast expanses of boreal forest and other forests that we have—well, we understand to the extent to which those land areas act as a carbon sink, capturing and containing and returning carbon to the land, to the soil. These things should be factored in as the federal government engages with Manitoba on these conversations.

In other words, as a new government in Manitoba, we value a conversation on carbon pricing that is based on evidence, and that is based on science, but also one that will clear—be clear about getting results. So we need that better conversation,

it's exactly the one that we're brokering with Manitobans, listening well to industry, listening well to stakeholder groups, to ordinary Manitobans who are wondering how this will come into effect. We need to make sure that it changes behaviour and then, of course, we haven't even had a discussion about how revenue would be returned, because let's be clear: this government has said we were not hired to raise taxes for Manitobans. And that means we need the conversation about how revenue generated would go back to Manitobans.

Now, the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) asks about the amount we stuck in the budget this year as a kind of a ballpark figure based on early estimates for carbon-price revenue. Well, I would say to him very strongly that that kind of an estimate would have prejudged the process, it would have run ahead of the exact process that I have just described to him. It would not be a process that officials would welcome because, of course, it would—it's asking us to determine revenue projections in advance of knowing the exact mechanism that'll be in place, and so we wouldn't proceed in that basis. Instead, what we have done is, of course, welcomed the discussion. We'll take the evidence; we will bring our plan to Manitobans; we'll have a good discussion as a province, but we'll continue to engage with the federal government to make sure they understand that there's a need to get this right.

* (15:20)

Oh, and if I could add one more thing, as well, it would be this: the other factor that we didn't talk about is the relative small size that Manitoba is, as an emitter, in comparison with other provincial jurisdictions and then other jurisdictions beyond our border. So we understand that Manitoba is not a huge emitter of carbon, relatively speaking. Two per cent of the natural-national greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to Manitoba, and that should also be factored in, as should the fact that Manitoba's forecast to grow from current 21 megatons of greenhouse gasses to 23 megatons by 2030.

Mr. Altemeyer: I think this is my last question.

My understanding is that the federal housing dollars for affordable housing—new construction—is in two different pools. I'm just looking for the minister to confirm that he has successfully matched, or his government has successfully matched, all of the federal funds that require matching provincial dollars so that we are bringing all of those resources to Manitoba.

Mr. Friesen: Once again, I would recommend to the member for Wolseley that the best place that he can facilitate a discussion on issues pertaining to housing would be with the minister responsible. That's the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding).

And I do note that the section of Committee of Supply agreed to by House leaders that would follow Finance is Families. So, at the close of these Estimates proceedings, then that member will have the opportunity to engage the member—or the Minister of Families on that issue.

He's, of course, referring to the fact that the federal government is funding housing in two different categories, one for capital—new capital housing initiatives, and one for the repair of existing housing stocks. And the new government of Manitoba is making significant investments in both current housing stock owned by the Province of Manitoba and, also, of course, subscribing to the program to make new spaces available. And we know it's necessary for us to do it.

We need to do a better job in Manitoba of managing the housing stock that we have. And while the Minister for Families will be the real expert on this subject, I know even from my vantage point as the Minister of Finance—I've heard again and again that management of existing stock is key. And I know too often in this province complaints were made about the turnaround time for housing suites owned and operated by the Province of Manitoba. Oftentimes, a suite would be vacated and then not let again, and significant amounts of time would go by and the housing stock would be contemplated for improvement. But the improvements took too long, there were questions about the procurement process, there were questions about incurring expenses that were not necessary. There were concerns about incurring the wrong kinds of expenses.

But we took very seriously the concerns around housing stock sitting idle and not reallocated. So I know that the minister is focused on truncating that turnaround time to make sure that we're really dealing with those individuals who need access to that housing.

So my advice to the minister—or the member—would be to go see that member for Families. And, if I decline to say so, I may have, on carbon, pricing that he should also direct those concerns to the Minister for Sustainable Development.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Chair, the last time that we were in Estimates together we were just talking to the minister asking questions about what was included in his year-over-year projections and what wasn't. And he had indicated, I believe, that the financial projections that were included in Hydro's IFF had not been included in his projections—and he's welcome to correct me if I've got any of this wrong.

He indicated that the government's commitment to reduce the PST by 1 cent on the dollar during the mandate was also not included in the budget projections. And then, I believe, he just indicated to the member from Wolseley that government's commitment to introduce a price on carbon had also not been included in the projections.

Given all of the things that are missing from the projections, what trust can Manitobans have that these projections are remotely accurate, especially since it—seems from Hydro carbon pricing, add marijuana into that, there's going to be a lot of additional revenue available to the Finance Minister going forward.

So I reiterate the question. What trust can Manitobans take from the projections that he's provided for us if these things are all missing?

* (15:30)

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for the question. There's actually a couple of questions contained in his preamble.

But first on Hydro, if the member goes to page 4 of Budget 2017, he will see there under net income of government business enterprises and indicated revenue in the 2017-2018 budget year of \$74 million for Hydro. And then he can see that there is a note, and the note indicates that the budget figures are per the integrated financial forecast for '15. So he must understand that that would be, then, the most up-to-date, completed financial information for Hydro, and that is the basis—that is the number that was taken, and on that basis for the purposes of constructing the 2017-18 budget.

Now what we do not do is, of course, push out from that point and make estimates about successive years. Simply at that point in time, that is the evidence that we use provided by the corporation for the purposes of calculating overall revenue on a summary line to central government.

So what the member knows from our previous conversations, though, is that this goes to overall sustainability of government. We have made very clear that we have made revenue assumptions that we have based on 2 per cent growth going forward—or 3 per cent growth going forward, and we have made expenditure assumptions based on 2 per cent.

This is a part of the overall conversation that this government has invited, saying that over time we must fix the finances. What that member does not, of course, allude to anywhere in his preamble is that there was a mess left to this new government, a—almost \$900-million deficit in 2016-2017, even based off of an estimate of a deficit, that was just over \$400 million that year.

And by the member's own Estimates in the final year of the NDP government, I noticed that even in that year they had made second quarter and third quarter projections that did not tell the story of where they would actually land. I noticed that, according to their own numbers, the second quarter report—oh, I'm sorry, I misspoke, I said '16-17, I meant the '15-16 year—and we saw that based off a budget that they delivered in 2015, they had indicated they would—they anticipated a \$441-million deficit.

Well, even by their second quarter results, they had adjusted that figure. They said it will be a \$505-million deficit. When they brought a third quarter update, they said that the deficit would be \$666 million. And then, of course, we know in actuality it was \$865 million. The reason is because the NDP failed to make any progress on deficit reduction. It failed to express any meaningful commitment to making departments hit their budgetary targets. But that doesn't tell the whole story. Really, one has to examine the last six or five fiscal years to see, really, the more complete way that the NDP abandoned that fiscal discipline.

And I notice that in Gord Mackintosh's new book that he makes the allegation that the NDP misled Manitobans on the return-to-balance date for years. He actually mentioned in one of his chapters that Treasury Board officials were making clear at that time that the budget could not be balanced for years unless something was done with a more aggressive plan, and he even mentioned it caused growing discomfort for their Finance minister who had to reiterate a talking point that they were somehow still on track. And we know now that the NDP government was not on track. That's why we will exercise that discipline and hit the targets.

We plan to hit the targets that we've set out to Manitobans, targets that we think are fair and reasonable.

Mr. Allum: We'd get a lot further in Estimates if the Finance Minister would reserve his inaccurate editorial commentary to some other time, some other place, and so we can conduct the people's business here this afternoon.

The government, as part of its budget preparations, paid a minimum of \$740,000 to a private sector consultant to do something called the fiscal performance review. Finance Minister bring that report along with him today? After all, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) did look Manitobans in the eye and said 97 per cent of that report would be made public. Did he bring it along with him today and table it for the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: I just want to take a moment to also respond to the other parts of the member's previous question because he called—he talked about assumptions that the government may have made on revenue pertaining to the legalization of cannabis, and then he talked about revenue that could accrue to government as a result of a carbon-pricing mechanism.

What it, of course, shows in the aggregate is once again the NDP ideology that all budgets will balance themselves. It shows the view that, always, the focus was on revenue generation and never on expenditure management. And obviously that's the kind of thinking that leads to the situation we're in whereby we have the—a very high provincial sales tax; we have tax increases in the last 10 years of seven hundred and twenty-seven, I'm showing, million dollars just in the budgets alone.

There's a cumulative total showing, in our notes, of when it comes to all increases to tax since 2000, showing an awful lot of tax increases. And I can get him that exact number to take a look—year after year, constant focus on increases to tax.

I look back; I see tobacco tax increases; PST applied to professional services in 2004; diesel up; capital tax in 2004; in 2006, personal tax credits, the eligible age increased; waste levy introduced in 2009; tobacco tax again in 2010; profits tax introduced in 2010; emissions tax on coal, oh, introduced in 2011. I remember that one—no consultation on that one whatsoever. The government could have gone to producers and said you're—in five years, you'll have to sunset and move

away from coal. They decided not to do that, just whacked them overnight with a tax. I remember that one very clearly. I was a new MLA, and I thought there must be better ways to introduce a tax than this, and indeed, it turns out that Manitobans felt the same—Budget 2012, tobacco tax up, fuel tax up, dividend tax, capital tax on banks increased—oh, yes, the dividend tax credit was reduced in 2012, I see; 2013, more tobacco tax increased; of course, though, 2013 sales tax rate increased, the Farmland School Tax Rebate tightened, Research and Development Tax Credit tightened.

* (15:40)

The tax goes on and on and on, and that's the same approach that this member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) takes today. He says, why not just tax more?

Let's understand that when he goes down that path, this is a high-tax jurisdiction. He can get—higher to raise taxes; there's very little discretionary room to raise taxes. We have one of the widest provincial sales taxes around. I mean, talk to any citizen of Manitoba and they'll remember when the provincial sales tax got applied to their home insurance policies, when it got applied to their employee benefits. They'll remember when sales tax got applied to their personal services and haircuts over \$50, and while that may not affect the member for Fort-Garry Riverview and myself, it sure affects a lot of Manitobans. Some people call that a tax on women. I know some people had said, you know, it's disproportionate because it just tends to be the case that in pricing, oftentimes, and stylists have told me this, too, that hair prices are not fair, that they're priced inequitably, but I'm not a professional in that area, can't reflect there.

I do drive down, though, to his comments about these revenue sources, and once again I want to underscore it would be not only inaccurate but it would not be advisable for the government to somehow hold their thumb up in the wind and pretend that they could get some kind of accurate estimate. There's a lot that remains to be seen, but when that member focuses on marijuana revenue, he's not at all talking about issues pertaining to compliance. He's not talking about anything that the Province would have to build to—for enforcement.

We have huge concerns on cannabis and what will it mean for this province and for this new government, and we plan to get it right. So he's talking about rushing ahead to revenue. We continue

to focus on getting better value for expenditure for all Manitobans, and I'm happy to welcome other questions on the KPMG report.

Mr. Allum: Gee, I just asked him if he brought along a report, and he couldn't answer yes or no to that. It's an endless series of rants from the Finance Minister, but I feel obliged, since he wants to go down this path with his own officials sitting right beside him, people I admire and respect very much, to point out to him that tax reductions by the Manitoba government since 1999 up to 2015 saved a family \$4,272. That's less than they paid the last time these guys were in government.

Since '99, affordability for Manitoba households increased in almost every way. Government during our 17 glorious years introduced more than 89 tax-relief measures that saved an average family, as I just said, over \$4,200 in 2015, provided \$8.4 billion in tax relief, including \$5.3 billion of personal income tax measures and \$3.1 billion in property tax measures.

But lower taxes were only one component of Manitoba's affordability advantage. There are other measures, including the lowest combined costs for auto insurance, electricity and home heating; keeping key front-line services like health care, education and child care affordable; maintaining the second lowest level of provincial taxes on fuel to keep pump prices affordable; maintaining the third lowest provincial sales tax rate; supporting opportunities to pursue education and skills training; and protect Manitobans from unfair business practices through consumer protection.

It's unfortunate that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen) for this province engages in and outlines a narrative that is factually incorrect and a disservice to the people of Manitoba.

Now I want to ask him about the various tax credits that the government looked at. Some he cut; others he preserved. Was the analysis of tax credits included in the fiscal performance review?

Mr. Friesen: Well, in a previous question, the member for Fort Garry alluded to the necessity—the need for accuracy, and then he wove a fiction onto the record of this Hansard.

So let's understand what the member was doing. The member would take—what he's essentially done is he's added up independent areas where his government has made a change but not on net, so he's done a simple arithmetic and added up areas

where his government's brought a change that would have advantaged the Manitobans on the bottom line, but then he has neglected to mention any of the areas in which his government would have brought a tax change that would have impacted negatively on Manitobans.

So he's not talking a net calculation, because I never heard anywhere in that member's preamble an allusion to the fact that in 2012, his government widened the retail sales tax.

Now I remember in that year that change—or the series of changes, indeed—the series of changes, because that's what Mr. Mackintosh said in his book that has now been published. This former NDP minister—he said that what was needed—and he called it the shotgun approach. He called it—his approach was a shotgun approach. He said he advocated for a wide array of budget, tax, and fee increases. Now why would a member of Executive Council—and he said he advocated for it at the table—why would he do that? Because he said it was harder for detractors to rally against it, so he could defray citizen opposition by making sure he hit them hard, but hit them wide.

So I would suggest, based on that evidence now in print and published, I think, by McNally, or at least available at McNally—I can't understand why I'm putting a plug in the record here for Mr. Mackintosh, but he might need the book sales—looked from Twitter like he got a pretty good crowd at the first night, so I will say that. But I noticed, like, it's a lot of disclosure he gives. So I would suggest that his approach was heeded in the lead up to the 2012 widening and the increases to these retail sales tax items. Those increases alone netted the provincial government in the neighbourhood of 180—it might have been \$172 million in that first complete fiscal year in which those changes would have been made.

The member also made no reference at all to the next year, the 2013 year, in which his government raised the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. And understand, the effect of that was to also now reach across that more broad array of taxes and raise the whole battery of taxes up on unsuspecting Manitobans. That measure brought revenue to the former government of more than \$280 million. We're talking about hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of additional tax, but, of course, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) makes no reference in his preamble to those things. So I reject the narrative he was trying to weave there, and in the

interest of the accuracy that he says he's concerned with, then we have to call him back to a more accurate accounting of the situation.

But I would also make note of the fact that in that same year—it was in that 2013-14 year—you would think that a government, regardless of ideology, sitting on a pretty sum of \$400 million additional to revenue, would have done a better job, but indeed, they missed their budget target and brought again a deficit that was higher than projected. For 2013-14, the deficit projection of \$505 million, but coming in on a summer-quarter line at \$652 million, hitting their target by almost a \$150 million.

The next year, they said we would do better—indicated a summary target of \$357 million as a deficit, but indeed, incurred a deficit of \$453 million. Even with those revenues, that former NDP government was unequal to the task of controlling expenditure growth, and it will not be the approach of this government.

Mr. Allum: Nothing was missing from the narrative. Everything that I read was included in Budget 2015. It was comprehensive, complete.

The minister just doesn't like the facts as they actually are and 'intead' prefers a torqued narrative designed for political purposes, all with one goal and one goal only, and that's to distort the truth for the people of Manitoba. I don't really know how he sleeps at night, to be honest with you.

I asked him though, if he brought the fiscal performance review with him, which the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said 97 per cent would be made public. He refuses to answer that question. I asked him if the various tax credits that—were reviewed in the fiscal performance review, and he failed to answer that question. In fact, he's striking out pretty much on every question we've asked so far today.

* (15:50)

So I want to see if we can try again and ask him: What was the criteria that determined whether or not the government saw value in various tax credits offered by the government of Manitoba? What made him choose one thing over another? And we'll get on to some specific tax credits in a moment, but what was the nature of the analysis done? Can he—and can he table that for us today as well?

Mr. Friesen: I'm happy to take the member's question.

I did want to say as well I had neglected to introduce staff; he made reference to my staff at the table. Currently seated with me is my Deputy Minister Jim Hrichishen; the secretary of Treasury Board, Lynn Zapshala-Kelln; Giselle Martel is sitting nearby, assistant deputy minister, Fiscal Management and Capital Planning. And I have Richard Groen with me from fiscal research—taxation fiscal research and also currently with us today, acting Senior Financial Officer Sadia Khokhar. Very good.

So—and so I'll answer the member's question: I would advise him not to get personal. I think, sometimes, the member thinks that maybe it helps his cause if he gets personal. He knows me well enough to know that I won't return in kind. It's just not my style. But, so—I sleep well at night, in answer to his question. But that doesn't mean that I don't take seriously that—the role that I have. Very significant challenges face this province. We are honoured, as a new government, for the opportunity that Manitobans have given us to address these things. But I would say very clearly: it's a very sobering task that we have before us.

And we are assisted greatly by those people in the civil service. Those I work with at a senior level—invaluable to me. Especially in the first year when you're a rookie minister, and I can still recall a number of those very first conversations, and there are just points in which you'd think that your brain cannot take in any more information. But, over time, you know, we grasp more of the challenge, and over time we know that we get a chance to make the policy that we believe will have effect come into place and produce results for all of Manitobans.

On the issue of KPMG, first of all I would note for that member again that, while he seems indignant at the idea that the new government would avail itself of expert opinion, I think that expert opinion—there's a very good place for expert opinion. But I also would point out to him that those who were in the NDP government before him shared our view. Because I remember back in 1999, I believe it was Deloitte with whom the former NDP government had contracted. And I made note in earlier conversations that the Deloitte work produced two volumes of reports back to government. There was a report both on fiscal performance, and there was a separate health performance report. Well, Madam Chair, that's exactly what this government did, is to solicit the opinion of an expert.

But what we would want to be clear on is that that's not the only opinion that we sought. And that is why, in the lead up to Budget 2017, we underwent the most comprehensive prebudget consultation that this government—this province has ever undertaken. I believe I saw 16,000 unique interactions with Manitobans, inclusive of in-person meetings, stakeholder meetings, prebudget consultations in community across the province, there were emails to the Minister of Finance office, there were emails to MLA offices, there were—there was a portal in which civil servants could respond. And I heard the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) chuckle, but that's a very, very significant process.

Now, I contrast that with a process one year previous, when the member for Selkirk was the minister of Finance and he undertook a prebudget consultative exercise. And I remember polling members of communities where he would go and I said: How many people actually attended that meeting that he had, and they said: Do you mean when—with his staff or besides his staff. And in some cases—in many cases, the answer was less than 10 people if you discounted staff and his personal assistant and, maybe, his legislative assistant as his constituency assistant.

Not only that, I think, moreover, I believe that that process incurred more than 60 or 70 thousand dollars of charges, but did not actually produce a budget at the end of the exercise. And I think it really confounds Manitobans to think that you would incur charges and submit expenses for reimbursement and call it a prebudget consultative exercise, but you wouldn't actually produce a budget through that exercise. So that is something for which the former government would have to answer.

On the member's question, he will see that, on the pages beginning with—in the budget and budget papers, beginning with appendix 1, Fiscal Performance Review, page 24 of the budget is the beginning of the summary of the work of that KPMG report. He will notice in there both the goal, scope and purpose of the report. And then he will go through and see the metrics on which the process proceeded. He will see that commitment made to results-based alignment, transparency, transformation, all 'encompassing', being that basic, fundamental change in behaviour, culture and approach to financial decision making across government that the report called for.

* (16:00)

And then it goes on, with other figures as well, to talk about 11 key areas of opportunity identified with savings estimated over \$100 million. I indicate this in order to flag to the member No. 4 was the recommendation for reduction of targeted tax credits. I remind the member that in Manitoba, we inherited a broad and vast array of tax credits, more than 30 tax credits with a value to government of over \$600 million.

Mr. Allum: I thought maybe I did know the Finance Minister, but I see the way in which he distorts the record, the way in which he plays with numbers, his failure to provide accurate answers to direct questions. Maybe I don't know him so well after all. And I have to tell him that he may not like the fact that it reflects as something personal, but I can tell you that he's a colossal disappointment to me in the way in which he answers questions.

We're talking about tax credits, but one final question on the fiscal performance review, how much did that ultimately cost—full and complete—the government of Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: I mean, I'm happy to have a conversation about the tax credits. I think it's an important conversation to have with Manitobans, and I'm certainly happy to have that conversation with the member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

Like I said, we inherited a tax credit system in this province that was broad, a vast array of tax credits—more than 30 tax credits with a value to government of over \$600 million. And, of course, we know what the evidence suggests—is that the existence of a broad and vast tax credit regime is reflective or evidence of a high-tax environment. And over time, as taxation and the burden of that grows to citizens, to business, to individuals, it's more and more incumbent on government to respond to those sensitivities as they arise and then to be able to offer relief valves, release mechanisms, to be able to say, well, we understand our policies have created inequities here; we'd like to address some of this. And we saw that over time.

What I want first to draw the members attention to is we knew that through our analysis, we knew that through the advice provided to us by that third party we engaged in contract, and we knew from talking with Manitobans—and I still remember some of the very specific engagements and conversations I

had with presenters at committees. They talked about doing away with ineffective tax credits.

Well, we've eliminated a number of boutique tax credits that had very little uptake or failed to meet their objectives, and I note, for instance, the Odour-Control Tax Credit. Now, we did away with that tax credit it had almost no uptake whatsoever. The Nutrient Management Tax Credit had almost no one subscribing into it. The Riparian Tax Credit, we eliminated because it had almost no activity whatsoever. I believe the Neighbourhoods Alive! Tax Credit failed to have any single application or amount into it. The data processing investment tax credit, there are those at the table who would know that at a period in time there was a rationale provided for that. That rationale changed. I think it shifted a third time but there existed for the purposes of the province, no need at this time to renew it. So we simply took those and eliminated them, because they produced no value for Manitobans.

Now, beyond that, I would also want to have that member realize there were many other tax credits that we didn't do away with. And I think about things like the adoption expenses tax credit—heard from groups, saw the value in that—the children's arts and cultural activity tax credit. We saw a federal government move to eliminate a number of tax credits for Manitobans. We have not in all cases followed suit, and there will be provisions and bits that that member will see that basically—after—then changed the reference points in the legislation in order for us to keep a tax credit where the federal government declines to retain that tax credit.

The Education Property Tax Credit, unchanged; the Fertility Treatment Tax Credit, unchanged; the Fitness Tax Credit, unchanged; the Mineral Exploration Tax Credit, personal tax credit, the Political Contributions Tax Credit—bits that—will show some small change to that but essentially, unchanged.

Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, of course, retained, but with some changes, but for good rationale as well. No. 1, we see the value in those who provide care in this way. It's a challenge for more and more Manitoba families who deal with this, but we also did note that the average claim inside the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit was around \$1,400 and we saw a threshold maximum that was much greater than that, and so we did reduce the overall allowable limit, but you will also notice that we did not try to restrict the ability of Manitobans to

claim more than one individual to whom they were providing that kind of care.

The changes we brought essentially make the tax credit administratively simple. We care in all cases also that things are done for the purposes of efficiency and effectiveness that the member will notice, also going back to the review of KPMG, it talks exactly about the need for efficiency and effectiveness in government. In this case, it was up to those in tax department to receive log books from two or three years previous when it came to the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, and try to discern fiction from reality in that. And we've, of course, changed that to make it administratively simple and still work for Manitobans.

Mr. Allum: So let the record show that the Finance Minister was asked a direct question about how much he paid KPMG, and he absolutely refused to answer that question, as usual.

But, as we're talking about tax credits, we'll note for the record that he increased the personal income tax brackets and personal amount that's going to cost Manitobans \$34.1 million full year, and yet to the average person, will result in an extra \$10, to \$12, to \$15 in their pocket for a full year. I wonder how he arrived at the analysis of that particular tax measure.

* (16:10)

But let it also show that he whacked the Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate to the tune full year of \$58.5 million. Let the record show that he whacked the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, a particularly cruel thing to do, to the tune of \$8.6 million. Let the record show that he whacked the Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate advance by \$6.4 million that will go—grow a full year to \$6.9 million. Let the record show that he whacked the Research and Development Tax Credit by \$9.2 million. Let the record show that he whacked the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit by \$4 million. Let the record show that he whacked the paid work experience 'tac' credit, to the tune of \$2.3 million and the list seems utterly and completely endless.

But we're asking here is for the analysis of why he chose the—to whack these tax credits in the manner in which he did and if he could provide some basis, some written analysis that would help us to understand why he did what he did, why he made those choices that he chose.

Mr. Friesen: Let the record show that for the last fiscal year for which the NDP government was in

power they told Manitobans that they would produce a deficit of just over \$400 million and then produced an actual deficit of more than four—\$865 million, which they failed to disclose to Manitobans.

Let the record show that in the space of eight fiscal years, the NDP doubled the net debt of the province of Manitoba to currently over \$23 billion. Let the record show that the NDP government essentially raided the Fiscal Stabilization Account and reduced that account to the lowest balance ever with the exception of one single fiscal year. Let the record show that all the while that they show this ineptitude for fiscal management, they raised taxes each and every year. Let the record show that the NDP overspent their planned budget in every single fiscal year. Even in the few years when they were in balance, they still overspent planned budget.

And let the record show that even Mr. Mackintosh, who released his book, directly addressed the issue of the NDP government misleading Manitobans on their return to balance for years. He indicated in his book that they stuck to the position set out in the 2013 budget, that the province would return to a surplus budget in 2016, and yet, at the same time, Mr. Mackintosh cites—and he was in that room, he was in Treasury Board, he was in Cabinet, he was in caucus and he indicated that Treasury Board officials continued to warn. Those same officials that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) says he respects, and well he should, they continued to warn government. That is the role of the senior civil service, to provide guidance to implement faithfully but to question effectively the plan of government. And they questioned. They said you could do this, but it would take a much more aggressive plan.

I also noticed that Mr. Mackintosh made note of the fact that he favoured savings and yet the former government would never go to a conversation about how to derive better value out of government expenditure.

Look, if it was just about spending more, then Manitobans would not have quarrelled so greatly with the NDP government. If it was about spending more, then I would cede the floor and say we cannot compare because this NDP government spent second highest per capita in education, second highest in health care, but not with results that were commensurate with that level of expenditure. If there's anything that provincial governments have learned looking around jurisdiction to jurisdiction,

there is no clear shot from levels of expenditure to results in departments on metrics when it comes to measuring progress, measuring performance. So, on expenditure, the NDP was very big; on expenditure control, not so great record.

Now, the member has said that I won't put the information on the record about the cost of KPMG. That's not true at all. As a matter of fact, he will know from our discussions last year in the Committee of Supply, I think we talked very specifically about the cost of that contract. The member should also know that just a very little bit of research, a modicum of research, would show him the proactive disclosure of this account. It's on the government website. Total cost of that contract is \$750 million and that—sorry, \$750,000, sorry. I was so caught up in NDP deficits, I was using too high of a number—\$750,000. It's always important as a Finance Minister to attach the correct amount of zeros behind any number you're quoting—\$750,000. But, simply, the government website would make that clear to him. And we believe we have value.

Back to the list of those tax credits we were discussing before, though. Let's keep in mind that this government has chosen to renew the Seniors' School Tax Rebate. We have kept the education amount. I note with great interest that the federal government has cut their education amount for students. This government has said, no, that's valuable; let's keep it there. But, when it comes to the Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate that he referenced, let's keep in mind that we heard from Manitobans. We heard from Manitobans and students at our prebudget consultations saying, Minister, you should rethink your approach to student support because you put the—

Madam Chairperson: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Allum: Well, what I think they probably told him, students and their families, is that they appreciated affordable tuition that came through and keeping tuition tied to the rate of inflation on the one hand, and then getting the Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate once they had graduated. He well knows that thousands upon thousands of Manitobans subscribed for that particular tax rebate, and we heard on our side—he perhaps wasn't listening to others—we heard on our side grave, grave concerns about his decision to make post-secondary education unaffordable for Manitoba students and their families. He's going to

pay a price for that in the future. There's—of that there's no doubt.

But, in the meantime, the difference between my letting the record show and his letting the record show is simply this: I read numbers, and this is for posterity's sake, for Hansard purposes, for any historian happens to be reading this in the future. I read directly from his very own budget, numbers from his very own budget, and yet he reads and talks from points of supposition that have no basis in factual information from his very own budget, which is what we're trying to get him to talk about here today, not other suppositions from other quarters.

I asked him if he could provide any analysis, any written analysis from the third party as he calls it—that's KPMG actually, the private sector consultant he hired to review the Province's financial performance—if he could provide any written analysis of that. And, of course, lies with everything else, a government that promised to be transparent is anything but. Premier (Mr. Pallister) of this province looked the people of—

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

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

The committee recessed at 4:18 p.m.

HEALTH, SENIORS AND ACTIVE LIVING

* (14:50)

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of Committee of Supply will now resume the consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living.

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

Could the minister please introduce his staff?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Yes, Mr. Chairperson, pleased to welcome back for a return engagement the deputy minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living, Karen Herd; and our CFO for Finance, Dan Skwarchuk.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed with a global manner, but this is considering that if it's a certain topic, to make sure that the minister's staff is—appropriate staff is on—present in the Chamber.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I'd like to start this afternoon picking up where we left off. I guess it was quite a while ago now, and I do have a copy of Hansard coming in, so I can pinpoint exactly where we were in terms of the questioning. But I just wanted to explore a little bit more page 75 of the Estimates book. This is with regards to intergovernmental and strategic relations. As we talked about last session, there were two positions removed and quite a—and a large amount of operating and what's listed as—a small decrease in what's listed as supplies and services.

Wondering if the minister, again, can just dig into that other operating under the intergovernmental and strategic relations. And I guess what I'm trying to find out here is, does—would this section of the department—would this be the section of the department that works with Ottawa to—you know, on things like the national Health Accord and that sort of thing—or maybe just give me a better picture of what exactly the decrease here might impact.

Mr. Goertzen: The area, I'm advised, would support the department in a series of levels of intergovernmental relations, so the member is correct in that, in some ways, it would partially support intergovernmental relations with the federal government. Of course, there are other departments in government that also provide support for that, of course, intergovernmental relations. Different parts of government often provide support to the multifaceted negotiation depending on what the issue is. But it would also then, of course, include municipal level of governments at times, Aboriginal or indigenous levels of government, so he's correct that it would have interaction with a variety of levels of government.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, in—just in reviewing the objectives, the activity identification and the expected results of this section of the department. It also talks, of course, about the work still that's done with First Nations and, I guess, some of this work would be bridging the gap between First Nations and the federal government and ensuring that First Nations in Manitoba are getting their fair share from the federal government. I know this is an area that's—

has been a struggle in the past, to have the federal government fully step up and cover their fair share of providing health services—particularly in some of the remote northern communities but, more broadly, on First Nations.

So, I guess I'm just—what I'm trying to understand here is, you know, in an area where there's been a—I don't know, deficit is the right word—but in terms of the ability of this section of the department to have the federal government step up, to have, you know, a lowering of their budget for this upcoming year—does the minister—I mean, maybe he can just talk about some of the efficiencies that he feel that can be found that would lead to this—the ability for the department to still reach its objectives with a reduced budget.

Mr. Goertzen: I mean, it's a fair point that the member raises about the specific negotiations with the federal government when it comes to getting appropriate level of funding for our northern, rural, indigenous, aboriginal communities. There are a number of areas of frustration, not the least of which would be transportation for First Nations—individuals from northern Manitoba who need service in Winnipeg primarily. That is a source of frustration.

There are, I think, north of \$30 million that is still outstanding from the federal government in that regard, and that exists not just, obviously, under the current government, that—the majority of that would have been totalled under the former government. But—while I recognize the member's concern—you know, I don't believe that it will inhibit our ability to negotiate properly on issues. We—I think we've been successful in raising the need for more support for our northern and Aboriginal—indigenous communities. There were some commitments made in the federal budget that came out relatively recently. I'm always reticent to sort of hang up the congratulations or mission accomplished sign until we actually see the fruition of those commitments. But, certainly, there were some commitments made by the federal government that we hope will have a positive impact in Manitoba, but they actually have to bear real fruit.

But there are other departments that will continue to be supportive, obviously, intergovernmental affairs plays a key and significant role in supporting all departments when it comes to intergovernmental relations. It—they would play, you know, often the primary role in those issues traditionally within government. Also,

Finance, when it comes to issues like Canada Health Transfer. I mean, those are transfers not into the Department of Health, but into the Department of Finance, and so they play a significant role in terms of those negotiations.

So it really is and contains solely in the Department of Health—it—primarily, the lead on some of this would come from intergovernmental relations working together with Health, who identifies the various needs within the system. But I understand the member's question, and I don't take it lightly that there could be some concerns always about intergovernmental relations, and can we do more. Perhaps we could do more, but I do think we've done a good job of raising our voice in terms of the need for support for our northern and Aboriginal communities and indigenous folks. But not exclusively them.

And I know there's been some criticism sometimes when you, you know, say that you want to provide support for certain areas, certain groups, or certain individuals, but sometimes a need is a need, and you want to ensure that you're getting those fulfilled, and you do it with the right reasons in place in terms of looking at the statistics, looking at where the need is, looking at where there's services not being provided that should be provided, and you had to speak out about those.

So it's not an unfair point by the member, but I feel comfortable that we'll be able to do the advocacy we need to do.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, and not to go too far down this particular rabbit hole, but you know, here we are without an agreement on the national negotiations with the federal government over the health accord, and—you know, so I guess I would disagree with the minister in that, you know, it occurs to me that the fact that we don't have a deal might be a—you know, might be related to this reduction in this particular area of the department.

* (15:00)

Now, I think what I hear the minister saying, though, and if he can clear this up, this might just sort of clarify everything for me, but I think what he—what the minister is saying is that the intergovernmental affairs department is—has taken on the bulk of these negotiations, and is that potentially where the savings is coming from? Is this not being negotiated by the minister in the department? It is—is it—and I think this is—I think, in fact, this has been

public knowledge, and I'm just not 100 per cent aware of exactly how it all works, but that the—that, in fact, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Intergovernmental Affairs department has taken the lead on these negotiations and other negotiations with Ottawa?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, when it comes specifically to the Canada Health Transfer negotiations, which the member has referenced, and this has been the case as far as I know in other provinces as well, and I've spoken to most Health ministers in Canada as their negotiations were ongoing or came to a conclusion, so I think that I have this accurately. Health has primarily taken the lead in terms of communicating the need. When it comes to the health-care system, the need for support from the federal government, and so we articulated, of course, Manitoba's unique situation, Manitoba only having 19—and dropping—per cent support from the federal government. So, as a Health Minister, I certainly took the lead in communicating that, and other Health ministers across Canada did the same in their own jurisdictions. That's why we were invited to the federal-provincial-territorial meeting in December of last year in—is it Toronto or Ottawa?—in Ottawa, and because the transfers actually had transferred into Finance. And so we were invited there on behalf—or at the invitation of the federal government to express the need. That's certainly what we thought we were going there for.

When we actually got there, we found out there wasn't a discussion at all; it was sort of a take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum. But we would certainly advocate on behalf of the Health Department and the needs, health needs, of citizens of Manitoba. Finance plays a role in terms of being the department that actually is on the receiving end of the transfer and what impact it has to the Treasury, and then, obviously, premiers have also played a role when it's come to the negotiations as we've seen across Canada.

Mr. Wiebe: And I'd like to just take this opportunity, Mr. Chair, to introduce our staff.

This is Emily Coutts, our research co-ordinator for the opposition caucus.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: So can I—maybe I just very quickly ask the minister: Is there a—can he give me a timeline? Is there a deal on the horizon? Can he give us any more details on where the negotiations are at on the federal transfers, and just give us any kind of sense of when

we can expect that a public announcement would be made on that?

Mr. Goertzen: I can't give the member a specific timeline. However, I would say, you know, it's my understanding that no money has flowed from the federal government to any province in Canada when it comes to the additional support that was being provided or offered for home care or mental health. And so no province has received any funding at this point, nor do I know that any is on the immediate horizon. So there's been no detriment to Manitoba from continuing to fight for an equal share. And it is important to remember that that really still is what this is about.

I appreciate the member rightfully is asking questions about timing, rightfully asking questions about whether other provinces have received funding, which they have not, but I do want to remind the member, for context, of course, that this is still about ensuring that the federal government and, you know, Manitobans know that providing a declining support for health care to the point where it's moved to sub 19 per cent in the province of Manitoba is not sustainable. And, ultimately, that comes with challenges and consequences to the health-care system, and I suspect we've made that point pretty strongly with the federal government, but it's not a point that we're going to stop making because it's not a dynamic that's going to change. Mr. Trudeau ran on a commitment to have a real discussion and negotiation with premiers. He reneged on that promise, and Manitobans deserve to know the consequences of the reneging of that promise, and we'll continue to remind them.

Mr. Wiebe: Just one last question with regards to an intergovernmental funding: So, as noted in the Estimates book on page 74, there are a few First Nations that are—there's an agreement—an MOA with the federal government that the provincial government provides health services to them.

Can the minister talk about the impact that the reduction in the budget lines—as noted on page 75—would have on the delivery of health care in those communities?

Mr. Goertzen: The member identifies the three northern nursing stations that the department is involved in operating. Of course, the majority of the nursing stations in northern Manitoba are operated by the federal government. There is no change to the operation of those nursing stations as a result of

anything in these Estimates, so they continue on as they have before.

Mr. Wiebe: Moving on, Mr. Chair, I do just have a few one-off questions that the—hopefully won't take too much time, and—but I will ask the minister to forgive me jumping around just a little bit to get some of these questions in.

Just with regards to the minister's capital plan—or sorry, the department's capital plan going forward, I know I've asked some questions with regards to that, but I don't think I've asked specifically about the department's five-year capital plan or maybe that's a six-year plan or a four-year plan.

Can the minister just table the capital plan for the—let's say—five—next five years that the department is considering?

Mr. Goertzen: Can I just get clarification from the member? Is he looking for a list of things that have already been built that we're paying the debt on, currently, or things that are—sort of a wish list of things that have come in from different places?

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker—Mr. Chair—Mr. Deputy Speaker—I apologize. Again, I'm just going to jump around a little bit, so I hope the minister—just wanted to know what the cost of the WRHA's Healing our Health System campaign was—the total cost.

* (15:10)

Mr. Goertzen: We've requested that answer. I think we'll have it for him before the session ends, and I'm—well, I'll provide it to him before that.

Mr. Wiebe: The noise in the room was such that I'm—sorry—I'm having trouble hearing the minister. I'm just wondering if he could repeat his answer.

Mr. Goertzen: That's rarely a criticism I've heard, but I have heard it a few times.

We will have that answer for you shortly. We've just requested it from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. So before the session ends today, I would expect we'll have it and I'll put it on the record, but just for the sake of time, if there's other questions.

Mr. Wiebe: And I think the minister was maybe looking for some clarification with regards to the question to—with regards to the capital spending, but maybe we'll—if he can repeat that as part of his next answer, that would be appreciated, because apparently the noise was such that I couldn't hear that either.

But just moving on, we've talked a little bit about rural doctors and with regards to the financial incentives that were available for physicians, the medical student and resident financial assistance program, the northern and remote family medicine residency stream.

I'm wondering if the minister can talk about what measurements the department was using when it was assessing those programs and ultimately making the decision to stop providing those to students.

Mr. Goertzen: There were a couple of measurements. I mean, one is just sort of looking at what the reality is in rural and northern Manitoba and to see whether or not, in fact, that shortages that existed and have existed for the last more than a decade are true and real in terms of being affected by the program, and we certainly didn't see that the shortages had lessened or would have been necessarily worse without the program. What we were finding is that the shortage was persistent and had been persistent over the last 10 or 15 years.

Mr. Blair Yakimoski, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The other thing is, of course, there are RHAs that do exit interviews with doctors who are leaving, and they often ask, of course, what the reason for doctors departing is, and money was rarely cited as—I wouldn't want to say it was never an issue at all, but it certainly wasn't one of the primary factors. The primary factors almost always were: is it the type of community that I feel at home in or that my family feels at home in? Am I getting the kind of practice that I would have expected? Am I getting the breadth of practice that I would hope for, that my training would say that I should have? Are there other people that I can practise with in the community? Those were primarily the concerns that were being identified by doctors who were leaving communities.

The other reality is that—what was happening under the program, is that students would enter the program in a medical field, enter the medical school, would make a commitment in year one. Year after year they would continue to have bursaries because they would say that they were going to be doing a return for service, but it often takes seven or eight years before they would get out of the program. And what we were finding is that their desire to work in certain communities often had changed over those seven to eight years.

Of course, you know, they are not just in formative times of their life in terms of their age, but also they learn a lot about medical practices. They go through the education of medical practice, and so trying to get somebody to commit at year one to something that is seven or eight years down the road, was difficult in terms of actually ensuring that that service was being provided.

But, also, it was difficult for the regional health authorities to plan because they weren't sure when individuals would actually be coming out of the program. And because often they were entering and saying, well, you know, we're interested in doing work in a certain area, but only in seven or eight years from now. It just became very, very difficult for planning, and often that planning just didn't end up in having real doctors there.

So there's a number of different metrics that were used, but those are certainly some of the key ones.

Mr. Wiebe: Can the minister just comment on, I guess, the—some of the other financial incentives that are available to physicians? And so I incorrectly mentioned the Northern/Remote Family Medicine Residency Stream as being one that was being removed, but we actually haven't heard anything on that.

So I guess if I could just ask specifically on that particular program, on the Specialist Recruitment Fund and on the Physician Resettlement Fund, has there been any changes planned to any of those financial incentives for physicians?

Mr. Goertzen: The member's correct. At this stage the northern/remote family medical program remains in place. Just to give him some scale and perspective, the—since the program came into place, there has been 3,027 grants issued to medical students on a return-for-service agreement with the value being approximately \$56 million.

So there's been a tremendous amount of money invested in the program. And I've never, you know, suggested that the former government had anything but the best intentions in developing the program. I don't doubt for a second that it was done with the idea that it would potentially be part of the solution for places that are underserved, but, you know, the issuing of 3,000 grants at a cost of \$56 million—more than \$56 million—and then what we see in rural and northern Manitoba in terms of the inability to attract

doctors, it just simply wasn't working for the money that was being placed.

* (15:20)

So we will work with stakeholders, including Doctors Manitoba and the college, and of course AMM, who's been quite instrumental in doctor recruitment. We'll be working with them to see where can money be better placed, but he is quite correct in that the rural stream family—rural/northern stream for family medical remains in place, but the context is that there is more than \$56 million put into the program without yielding the results we would hope for.

Mr. Wiebe: And with regards to the Specialist Recruitment Fund and the Physician Resettlement Fund?

Mr. Goertzen: The specialized recruitment fund, I'm advised, is still in place. And, I'm sorry, I'm now having problems with hearing the member. There was another fund he was asking about in addition to that.

Mr. Wiebe: The Physician Resettlement Fund.

Mr. Goertzen: There have not been changes to that program, either.

Mr. Wiebe: Can the minister comment on the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund? Is there any changes, removal of the program or increase—increasing the funds available included in this year's budget?

Mr. Goertzen: There's not been changes to that program.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm wondering if the minister can just talk about the targets or the measurables that he's looking for from the—those remaining three incentive programs.

So the member mentioned the cost for the Northern/Remote Family Medicine Residency Stream and the other two funds, as well. Can the minister just talk about what measurables the department has looked into to determine the efficacy of those programs?

Mr. Goertzen: Just putting on the record the response from the previous question: the information campaign is related to the Peachey report and the reorganization of hospitals in Winnipeg. It is a \$507,000 campaign roughly broken up between—roughly broken up 50/50 between the media by—

and the production and creation portion of the advertisement.

Mr. Wiebe: And I—I'm sure the minister is looking to get more information on the measurables for the program. Maybe I'll just ask another question in the meantime.

Can the minister comment on what the average time that recipients of the Medical Student/Resident Financial Assistance Program—what was the average time that they would have practised in rural Manitoba? I think the minister at one point mentioned a time frame, but if he could just clarify, what was the average time that recipients of the grant practised in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: The information the member is looking for, we don't have currently here. But if he's seeking—I'd be certainly happy to offer him a briefing with officials on this area of questioning if there are broader issues he wants to explore on doctor recruitment.

Mr. Wiebe: Maybe the minister can talk a little bit about how the grant program, the financial assistance program for doctors, how that would—for rural doctors—can he explain how that grant program will wind down? When will the department stop distributing grants, and will the department first reduce the number of grants or the amount of money that students receive, or is it sort of all at once?

Mr. Goertzen: We're currently working with the Department of Education in terms of how the grant program will wind down, but it would not be our expectation that the program would be offered in the fall session of medical school.

Mr. Wiebe: I think the minister talked about experts hiring experts—this was during the campaign—talked about hiring experts to recruit foreign doctors. I'm wondering if that's represented in this year's budget or if he can talk about plans the department has to do that.

*(15:30)

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

I mean, currently there exists what's called the Provincial Medical Leadership Council, the PMLC, which was created a few years ago, back in the time of the former government, that consists of doctors in different leadership groups who are part of looking at a number of different issues, and not the least of which is medical staff recruitment and retention.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities has also established a rural physician recruitment and retention advisory committee. These were sort of operated—so there are, you know, there are experts that somewhat exist and that there others that haven't been tapped. But they—these two entities sort of operate not at cross-purposes but not necessarily with the provincial alignment that we think would be best. So we will be creating a provincial recruitment entity that will not only tap into the existing experts that exist on these two entities, but also looking at others to be part of a province-wide collaborative effort.

And it is, you know, I would say, while I have the opportunity, it is one of the challenges that I've found in this job in the last more than a year now, I suppose, that there still exists too many silos within health care in Manitoba. We are too small of a province, in terms of population, recognizing there's a great deal of land mass within the province of Manitoba, but we are too small of a population to have so many siloed entities. And each of the RHAs, as an example, is responsible for doing some of their own recruitment of medical professionals, in particular, doctors. They don't necessarily work together.

There have been some advancements in terms of having shared resources and having teams that come out to certain communities to work in certain areas that I think has been beneficial. That sort of collaborative approach is important. But I am frustrated on many days by the number of compartmentalized—I'll call them silos, for lack of a better word—that exists still within the system. It is too much of a fractured system where there are similar entities doing similar things but they're not doing them together, and it causes misalignment, it causes inefficiency and it causes there to be not the kind of service I think that Manitobans would want.

So that's a broader answer to the specific question that the member asked. We'll be bringing these entities together into a provincial body of recruitment, but the more general response is that there are—there exists too many isolated parts of the health-care system for a province the size of Manitoba. It is too complex, it is too dispersed and that is a problem.

And I'm sure it was a problem for the provincial—former government as well. I think that's one of the reasons they created the Provincial Medical Leadership Council, was to try to bring more of a provincial lens to the different challenges

that were existing within the province. But I think that while that was a helpful step, I'm not sure that it was a step that went far enough.

And so that continues to be one of the challenges that I look at as the Minister of Health and in terms of how do we tear down the silos and use, you know, we use the term Manitoba Advantage and then that's been used in different contexts in different places, often more on, you know, the hydro or economic front in past times. But I would say that one of the things that could be the Manitoba Advantage is we have a relatively small population. We have one urban centre that, in terms of population, is considerably larger than any other urban centre. There are synergies that should be able to be harnessed in a province like that, but it is too siloed within our health-care system and it's too fractured, and that—this is one example of that but it's an important example the member raised.

Mr. Wiebe: So just one last question with regards to rural doctor retention.

I know the minister's talked about having a new plan and some new strategies for improving doctor retention. What I guess—what I—and I can appreciate that he may not want to let the cat totally out of the bag here, but can he just comment on whether that's looking at grants for medical students in return for service in rural Manitoba in some way similar to what had been established before? Is it—would it potentially be some sort of grant for physicians who establish practice in rural Manitoba? Is it focused on GPs? Is it focused on ER doctors?

Can the minister just talk a little bit about some of the needs and some of the—I guess priorities that they're looking at to improve doctor retention in rural areas?

Mr. Goertzen: The plan will touch on a number of different things, certainly one will be how do we ensure that there are fewer barriers within the health-care system. How do we ensure that doctors who may, for example, practise primarily in Winnipeg but would be happy to do some practise in a rural setting for a few days a month, for example, can have that happen.

Certainly, we know that there are doctors in Churchill, for example, who are often coming on a regular basis—a regular rotation to the Health Sciences Centre and doing some intensive, acute service there for a few days a month and then they go back to their home community in Churchill. That has

worked well because it allows those doctors who want to be in Churchill to do that but to continue to keep their skills up by having that acuity work within the Health Sciences Centre. But they exist within one regional health authority, because the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is also responsible for Churchill. So that becomes an easier process.

But we need to find a way to ensure that the doctors who would be willing to work in rural Manitoba for other periods of time or vice versa can do that more seamlessly, and that is a problem. My friend from Minto will remember the time when lawyers had huge barriers that existed for them between provinces in terms of their practice. Much of that has been torn down over the last decade or so, but that still exists in many ways in Manitoba, where there is that inability to easily practice in different areas and so it makes it hard to fill gaps where those gaps exist. That is one issue. So in terms of mobility of service is something, I think, that certainly needs to be looked at and considered and we would do that of course in consultation and discussion with the many partners within the health-care system.

Other areas where I think there can be greater support made in terms of where the groups of practice, where are there teams of doctors that want to be involved in a rural setting where they essentially rotate in and out of a facility. So it might not always be the same doctor in a hospital or an ER, but there's a team of doctors who have a regular rotation there that provide support both to the community but to the doctors as well. And those things go to the issue of what are—why are doctors not staying in communities.

So I said in an earlier answer to a question that the member asked that money is not the primary factor that we're seeing for doctors in terms of where they practise. While the supply of doctors in Canada is changing, and it's changed over the last 10 to 15 years, the reality is most doctors are going to do fairly well in terms of financial remuneration—and certainly better than the average Canadians—where they go and practice. So they are looking at other issues.

So the strategy has to have a provincial lens, it has to involve a provincial look, it has to ensure that mobility is considered in that provincial look and it has to ensure that collaboration between doctors in a potential team effort is also looked at.

So those are certainly some of the pillars of a program that we'd be looking for.

* (15:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just—it's my understanding, in terms of the changes that are proposed at the Misericordia care centre, that you plan to continue to have the Buhler Eye Care Centre at Misericordia Health Centre.

Is that correct?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, that is correct. The Buhler Eye Care Centre will continue to provide surgery for ophthalmology and cataracts at the—at that facility.

Mr. Gerrard: The—right now, there's more than 4,000 people a year who come to the urgent-care centre for eye issues and eye care. And where they can't be handled easily at the urgent-care centre because of the complexity of the situation, they are referred to the Buhler Eye Care Centre, and that kind of synergy seems to work very well.

What would be the plans, if the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre were to close, in terms of would there still be a clinic or would there still be an eye urgent-care operation at Misericordia that would work together with the Buhler Eye Care Centre to make sure that this kind of synergy was maintained?

Mr. Goertzen: The member will know we don't have WRHA officials here. We've gone back and forth in terms of having officials from the WRHA here, and that's no fault of the member opposite. I think the discussion had been between the official opposition and us in terms of when questions would come regarding the Peachey plan and the reorganization and then we would try to have those officials here. So I respect the questions and I just want the member to know, if he sometimes feels unsatisfied with the answers, which he probably does daily in question period, it is not a reflection of him, it's simply because we didn't realize we'd be going back into this line of questioning. But, if there's a future day in Estimates, you know, I'm certainly willing to recall those individuals. But I'll do the best that I can with the information that I have.

So my understanding is, from the information we've been provided, that there is about 28,000 visits to the Misericordia urgent 'sare' centre—urgent-care centre where the chief complaint is eye-related. So our numbers might differ somewhat there, and that's neither here nor there, it's just not an insignificant number, and so I'm not disputing that. The RHA has indicated that they certainly recognize the special role that the Misericordia Health Centre plays in 'ophthology' and that the urgent-care centre has

developed a reputation for that. So they've, in discussions that I've had, they've certainly committed to working with the Misericordia and the doctors there to ensure that there is a pathway to access urgent outpatient consultation when it's needed. So that work is ongoing, I'm told.

Mr. Gerrard: Several weeks ago, the minister was speculating a little bit about what might happen with funding for chiropractors.

Can the minister provide some clarification in terms of whether there are changes or none with regard to funding for chiropractors?

Mr. Goertzen: The member will know that I'm—as some ministers are—under certain restrictions when it comes to the blackout period that currently exists.

Now I—and I'm sure the member, being astute and on top of the rules, would be quick to remind me that well we're in committee, and so those rules might be slightly different, but the reality is that the announcement of any change in committee would have to be followed up with letters and notification to those who were having that change put upon them. And that, I'm told, would be a violation of the blackout rules. So I'm unable to provide the answer—not as a result of the rules that guide me in this committee, but the subsequent action that would have to take place if I provided that answer.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister and understand the situation.

The—what I would put on the record is that I'm in support of the funding for chiropractors continuing. There is substantive, substantial evidence that chiropractic treatment of lower back injuries can be very helpful and that in a number of circumstances there's very good examples of chiropractors and physicians working very well together in one way or another.

I have—it's been brought to my attention recently that there may be a number of individuals who have been treated with neck manipulations by chiropractors, and to my understanding, the evidence for the benefit of this is not quite as substantive as that for lower back pain. And the concern that was brought to my attention was that there have been a number of individuals in Manitoba who have had strokes at the time or shortly after neck 'malipulations'.

Has the minister any evidence, and has he been looking at this aspect in terms of his assessment and plans regard to chiropractic support?

Mr. Goertzen: First of all, I appreciate the member putting his comments on the record regarding chiropractors. I, too, value the service that chiropractors provide in the province of Manitoba. I also agree that they can work collaboratively with other health-care professionals. Any changes that may occur as a result of things beyond their service are exactly that: they're beyond the issue of the service that they provide. They really are a result of the fiscal reality of health—of sustainability of health-care.

If I were a less cynical person, I would use this opportunity to speak about the need to have the federal government provide real support to health care in Manitoba so we could continue to do the things that the member's asking, such as chiropractic care, but that's not my nature, so I won't mention that. But I do want to say that certainly we do value very strongly the role chiropractors play, and the member will hopefully take comfort in knowing that any changes that were to occur in the near future would be a result of the consultation that we've had with chiropractors. And I would put on the record that certainly to this point, that consultation has been professional, has been helpful, and I very much appreciate the way in which those discussions have taken place.

* (15:50)

In terms of the specific question that the member asked on this issue, I can advise him that I did—having heard of this issue, I did request that the health professionals advisory council undertake a review of the medical evidence that exists when it comes to neck manipulation and chiropractic work. My understanding is that that review has been completed and that the results of that review will be posted publicly as other Health Professions Advisory Council reports have been posted publicly once the blackout restrictions have ended.

Mr. Wiebe: I do want to just pick up on where the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) began his line of questioning and where I began my line of questioning many, many days ago, and that's with regards to the Concordia Hospital—in his case, it was the Misericordia hospital asking about services there for his constituents. And this follows from the line of questioning that we had today in question period as well.

And that's simply to say that there is a—you know, a large and growing community engagement on this issue. Folks want to make sure that the minister is listening—that the department understands the impact that they believe that this will have in their community, and so they want to know that the results will be there. And so, I guess I'm just trying to understand exactly what the minister—what the expected outcomes are for the minister in closing the emergency room at Concordia, the urgent-care centre at Misericordia. What are the measurables that he's looking for in terms of reduction in wait times that he would deem as being successful in achieving his goals in this reorganization?

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I thank the member for the question, and I want to say again, I respect the honourable member. We've—you know, we've had some heated Estimates at times, and over the next several days, we might have some more, but that doesn't diminish, you know, the respect that I have for the member as an individual. And I also respect that this is not an easy decision for him personally, I know, and he's expressed some of those personal experiences, and I do respect that.

He will know, though, that the report—the Peachey report was commissioned by his government for the reasons that have been well-articulated here. Patient care in our emergency rooms was not going the way any of us had hoped, and they were—it wasn't getting better. And so I'm assuming that that was the reason why the former government and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) commissioned that report was to try to find a solution to a problem that has been growing and not getting better, despite all the money that was being invested into it over the last 10 or 15 years.

Does that make that an easy decision, was it an easy decision for the former government to hire Mr. Peachey? I'm sure not. But there needed to be solutions that were actioned.

The solutions that were presented by Mr. Peachey were based on science; they're based on evidence; they're based on his reports. Does that make the decisions easy? It doesn't.

I don't think there's any easy decisions in health care. I haven't come across many, anyway. If they're all—they're all difficult, because they all impact people personally, and I understand that.

And I appreciate the member, you know, raising concerns on behalf of his constituents. As an MLA

for 13 years, I know that that is an important part of his role, and I don't take that lightly

But the challenge that the member also has to give himself is a challenge that was issued by Dr. Brock Wright at the announcement, and that is—I mean, Dr. Brock Wright said at that announcement where the Peachey report was accepted is that critics have to ask themselves, if not this, then what. And that's an answer we've not gotten from this member or any other member in the government. If not this plan, then what?

An Honourable Member: QuickCare clinics.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and so, I mean, I'm open to the discussion of the solutions the member has, but he will know that for 17 years those solutions didn't exist. I mean, they—the government opened QuickCare clinics and it didn't change the wait times. The government put up more than \$100 million into ERs in the past several years and it didn't change the wait times.

And so I'm assuming that out of that frustration the former premier—and I'm sure with all the right intentions—commissioned the Peachey report. And so the solutions that are contained within there are difficult. They've been difficult in every other province too. They were not easy in British Columbia, they were not easy in Hamilton, they weren't easy in Ottawa, they weren't easy in Saskatchewan, but in each of those jurisdictions, they did end up, you know, making things better and so ultimately I recognize that these are challenges.

And the member will continue to advocate on behalf of his constituents, as he should as an MLA, and I will respect him for doing that, but there still needs to be the answer to that question: What is the solution? If not this—which is what Dr. Brock Wright challenged all of us, and I, in the end, will rely on the medical advice of medical experts. Will it be to my peril as the Health Minister? Perhaps, but I would rather do the things that I believe are based on evidence and based on what experts are saying and face whatever political consequences come to me from that than doing nothing or trying to make decisions on politics. If we don't listen to health experts, if we don't look at the advice that we've asked them to give us, if we don't make the decision based on best practices in other jurisdictions, then we're headed down a road to things not improving, which is exactly what's happened over the last 17 years.

So I appreciate the member in terms of him raising these concerns on behalf of his constituents. He has my respect for that, he does, but in the end, decisions have to be made based on evidence, whether they're difficult or not, to try to improve the system.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, and I think at this point what the people of my community, as I'm representing them here, are asking for is some kind of hope that there is a chance that the hospital would be repurposed or used in some way that allows for accessibility for urgent and emergency care.

So I guess maybe what I'll do is, just in my closing, is just to ask one last question and hopefully we can get an answer to this as we move forward, because I think it's an important one and I guess the broader question is, simply, is: Is there still hope? Is there still a chance? And I know that members of the community have been in touch with the minister; I know that members of the board have also communicated to the minister. I know staff at the hospital, including the CEO, have been clear in their feelings about the future of the hospital and the ability for it to have a bright future in urgent care or emergency care.

I also note for the minister that, you know, this isn't the first time that Concordia Hospital has felt the squeeze. In fact, you know, in looking back through the history of the hospital—you know, and I've got the book if the minister wants to read it ever, it's the last 75 years, from 2003 back of the Concordia Hospital. He'll know that it has a very colourful history and a history that speaks to the pride that the Mennonite community in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba has had in providing quality health care. But he'll note that in the 1980s there were, again, pressures on the hospital that the hospital would be—the services would be reduced. At that point, there was a very robust plan for expansion of the hospital. The new government came in in the 1980s, that was put on hold.

But it was actually the work of Bonnie Mitchelson, and I'll put that on the record here and I'm certainly not the first one to say that, that Bonnie stood up and fought for this hospital, made sure that people in this place knew how important the hospital was for her community and beyond. I know—

An Honourable Member: She got results.

Mr. Wiebe: —she's been a strong advocate, and as the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) correctly

points out, she got results. She helped the hospital be rebirthed as a different—in a different role but in a very significant one and one that allowed for that primary care that was so important to the community to continue.

* (16:00)

So I do hope that the minister is listening. I do hope that he has—that this isn't a hard no, that there isn't an opportunity for this hospital to be re-examined. And I guess just to end on a factual question that maybe the minister could provide the answer for is, if he could tell me what—if they've done an analysis within the department and what would be the estimated cost in simply keeping the hospital emergency room open as a urgent-care centre, rather than a full emergency room. What would that be? What kind of impact would that be on the budget?

And, again, is that something that the minister would be willing to consider or has considered? Or is there still hope for the people in northeast Winnipeg that this government might see that the impact will just be too great for those people in that area to completely take this hospital off-line in terms of emergency or urgent care? And with no other access points to the health-care system, it really does leave people in that community in the lurch.

So maybe I'll just leave it at that, and I guess simply say I appreciate the minister endeavouring to answer this question and all the other questions that he's undertaken during the Estimates process.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank the member for this process and the question. I mean, I want to re-emphasize that the Peachey report, as commissioned by the former government, wasn't about saving money, and so I know he's asking about what the cost would be for an urgent-care centre, but the Peachey report was never about saving money, and that's why I think there's been a confusion in the media because there's been questions about, well, how much will this save and when did you know what it was going to save, and why didn't you say what it was going to save, but the focus was never about saving money.

Will there be savings? Well, there will because when you align the system and it becomes more efficient, you save money. But that never was what it was about. You know, in terms of Concordia and its future, I answered the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) a few days ago: it remains a hospital;

it will remain a hospital. I believe that the future for Concordia is bright, if not brighter than ever.

You know, there was changes that happened, I know, a number of years ago, when orthopedic surgery was moved from St. Boniface to Concordia. There was concerns about those things then, and yet Concordia has become a real leader, you know, and I think a bit of a shining star when it comes to orthopedic surgery, and I believe that they will again take up this challenge and, in the years ahead, having focus on orthopedics and geriatric care, based on the demographics and everything we see, I think that they'll be not a less important role in the health-care system. I would put on the record and guess that Concordia will have a greater role in the health-care system in the years ahead if it takes on these challenges, and I believe that to be true.

So, I mean I recognize that change is difficult. It's always difficult in anything. It's particularly difficult in health care, but it was not an issue of money when it comes to the Peachey implications, and Dr. Peachey made that clear, that it wasn't about money for him. That was never his mandate; it was never his consideration; it was purely about how do we make the entire system in Winnipeg work better for patients so that there are better patient outcomes and better patient care. It was not an exercise in savings, although there will be savings that will be emitted from it.

So, you know, I appreciate the member talking about the Mennonite history in Concordia and the faith-based hospital that it is, and I very much appreciate that and value that. I know Mennonites—I know a few Mennonites and they have been—it'll come as a surprise to many in the committee, I know—Mennonites have faced adversity for as long as they've been practising their faith in many parts of the world, and they've been driven from many countries of the world, and they have found success in the places that they have resettled. And I have no doubt that that history within Concordia will serve it well as it takes on new challenges and equally important challenges within the health-care system.

I have great respect for those who are currently and who in the past have advocated for Concordia Hospital, and I expect that they are going to be a valued and perhaps more valuable part of the health-care system going forward than they've ever been, Mr. Chairperson.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): Are there any further questions?

Seeing that there are no further questions, I shall now call the resolutions.

Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$33,156,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Provincial Policy and Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,942,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Health Workforce Secretariat, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$28,740,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Active Living, Indigenous Relations, Population and Public Health, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,666,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Regional Policy and Programs for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$44,295,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Mental Health and Addictions, Primary Health Care and Seniors, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,758,425,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Health Services Insurance Fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$198,187,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Capital Funding, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,168,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Costs Related to Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 21.10: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,254,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 21.1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 21.1.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Wiebe: I move that line item 16.1.(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

Motion presented.

* (16:10)

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Mr. Wiebe: I will keep it brief.

You know, we've had an opportunity to go thoroughly through the Estimates. I believe, you know, and there may be an opportunity during concurrence to bring this back and ask further questions, but I do believe that we've investigated some of these numbers, and what we've found is, is that there's reductions in a number of areas, key areas, that Manitobans have concern about.

You know, this government campaigned on the promise to protect front-line services and to protect front-line workers, and yet we've seen time and time again that they're willing to make cuts, whether that be in capital funding, in closures of front-line services like emergency rooms, to squeeze nurses and doctors who are providing those front-line services, and, you know, and so this is—squeeze the wages of those particular front-line workers—and, quite frankly, at the same time, then, to take a 20 per cent increase in the amount that's paid to ministers, including this Minister of Health, so we think that it's only appropriate that in a time when the

Premier (Mr. Pallister) says all hands on deck, that he expects front-line health-care workers to take flat wage increases or no increases at all, we think it's appropriate that the minister should freeze his own salary, take that reduction, show solidarity with other Manitobans, and, hopefully, this sends a message that additional cuts to front-line services are being felt throughout our communities and that the impacts that are happening are real. And this is just one small way for the minister to show solidarity with those workers and support this motion.

Mr. Goertzen: I won't speak to the virtues of my own salary. I never ran for politics to get wealthy. The member from Minto will have a better appreciation than I that we both probably have given up significant salary and future salary by being here. So I won't speak to that.

But I will speak to the issue of the health-care system generally and the challenges that it faces. And I don't underestimate those challenges. But I hope that the member and other members recognize that the Estimates are a lens in this year, but it's not the lens that I, as the Health Minister, can solely look through. I have to look forward to the sustainability of the health-care system well beyond 2017-18 and well beyond my time as Health Minister. I think too often in the past, Health ministers and governments more generally have looked only at the current year, at the challenges that existed within a current year, and never looked further in terms of what decisions made today would have—what impact they'd have on the health-care system tomorrow.

So my job, I view my job, regardless of what the salary is, is to not look at the decisions based solely on what impact they have today, but also to remember that we are trying to sustain a health-care system for our children and for our children's children, and we should never underestimate the challenge of that. The demands within the health-care system grow significantly each and every year. They will continue to grow significantly in the next 20 to 30 years. And, without taking action to maintain sustainability, we simply would not be able to maintain the level of service for our kids and their kids that we would expect.

That is not a challenge unique to Manitoba. It's not a challenge unique to me as the Health Minister or to this government. Every government, every Health Minister in Canada faces that. It is what makes the job both exciting and challenging but incredibly difficult—

An Honourable Member: People aren't believing you, though, Kelv. That's the problem. Aren't believing you.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and you know, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) says that people aren't believing me, and that's his perspective. But I do believe that if they look at the reality that every health department in Canada faces, that the previous government faced as well, they would recognize that the sustainability of the health-care system isn't working. When they would look at the fact that if things would not change in Manitoba on the health-care system, in 15 years from now, there'd be two departments left in government. There'd be Finance and there'd be Health: the department that brings the money in, and the department that spends it all. And all those departments that are involved in the social determinants of health, Education, Family Services, the many other departments, would cease to exist.

So the member for Elmwood, as he bangs in signs in the different places that he would like to bang signs in, he should remember that with—*[interjection]* He should remember that with each swing, with each swing of that hammer, he's hammering away at the Education Department, he's hammering away at the Family Services Department, he's hammering away at all those different departments that his constituents would consider to be valuable. He's also hammering away at the future of people who need the health-care system in five, 10, 20 years from now. He's hammering away at those in his family who are going to need that health-care system in five, 10, 20 years from now. So he can continue to swing away, but with each swing, he's chipping away at his own credibility when it comes to what the future of the health-care system needs.

So, Madam—or Mr. Chairperson, the system isn't really what is important to me. While the system is the vehicle that is important in terms of delivery care, it is the care that it's important to me. It is patient care that ultimately is what we should all be focused on.

And so I hope that in the days and months and weeks ahead, as we have discussions on health care, that the member opposite will think about that, and he can swing away in the summer and hammer in all the signs that he wants, but he's missing the great big sign that says the system isn't sustainable. He missed

it for 17 years when he was in government, and he's missing it now.

And I hope that that sign will somehow illuminate in his mind at some point that the health-care system simply isn't sustainable under the current fashion, and in part of—a significant part of the reason why that is, is because he didn't do anything when he had the chance in government to make it sustainable.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): I heard a no.

Voice Vote

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Wiebe: I'd like to request a recorded vote.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): A formal vote has been requested. Call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for recorded vote.

In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber considering the Estimates of Health, Seniors and Active Living, the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) moved that line item 16.1(a) be amended so the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600—that line item 16.1(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$33,600.

This motion was defeated on a voice vote, and subsequently two members requested a formal vote on this matter.

The question before the committee, then, is the motion of the honourable member for Concordia.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 14, Nays 33.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): The motion is accordingly defeated.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): This committee will resume consideration of the last resolution for this department.

Resolution 21.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,298,000 for Health, Seniors and Active Living, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): I'd like to see if there's leave in the House to call it 5 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Blair Yakimoski): Is there leave in committee to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I'd like to see if I'd like you to canvass the House, please, to see if there's leave to call it 5 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Minimum Wage Legislation	
Committee Reports		Fontaine	2386
		Pallister	2386
Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs		Efficiency Manitoba Act	
Eighth Report		T. Marcelino	2387
Smook	2379	Pallister	2387
Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development		Government Air Services	
Seventh Report		Maloway	2388
Piwniuk	2380	Pedersen	2388
Tabling of Reports		Concordia Hospital ER Services	
Cullen	2381	Wiebe	2389
		Goertzen	2389
Ministerial Statements		Poverty Reduction Plan	
4-H's Annual Highway Cleanup		Lamoureux	2390
Eichler	2381	Cullen	2390
Lindsey	2381	MMIWG Inquiry	
Klassen	2382	Morley-Lecomte	2391
		Clarke	2391
Members' Statements		Age and Opportunity	
La Société historique de Saint-Boniface		Swan	2391
Selinger	2382	Stefanson	2392
Pick Up and Walk		Split Lake and Gillam	
Goertzen	2383	Lathlin	2392
		Pedersen	2392
Frank Watt		Waste Water Infrastructure	
Isleifson	2383	Smook	2393
		Clarke	2393
Ramadan		Petitions	
Mayer	2384	Neighbourhoods Alive! Funding	
Shoal Lake Airport		Swan	2393
Nesbitt	2384		
Oral Questions		Taxi Industry Regulation	
Advertising During By-Election		Maloway	2394
F. Marcelino	2385	F. Marcelino	2395
Pallister	2385	Saran	2395
		T. Marcelino	2395

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Committee of Supply
(Concurrent Sections)

Executive Council

F. Marcelino	2396
Pallister	2396
Lindsey	2403

Finance

Altemeyer	2406
Friesen	2406
Allum	2410

Health, Seniors and Active Living

Goertzen	2417
Wiebe	2417
Gerrard	2424

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>