

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

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authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 25, 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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Madam Speaker: Are there any introduction of bills?

**Bill 233—The Nanjing Massacre
Commemoration Day Act**

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that Bill 233, The Nanjing Massacre Commemoration Day Act, be now read a first time. Thank you.

Motion presented.

Ms. Marcelino: I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce, for a first reading, Bill 233, The Nanjing Massacre Commemoration Day Act.

This bill designated—designates December 13th as an annual day to remember and honour the victims of the Nanjing Massacre, also known as the Rape of Nanking.

This horrific act of wartime violence saw an estimated 300,000 Chinese civilians and soldiers murdered and some 20,000 women and children brutally raped.

This day will be a time for Manitobans to express their commitment to the protection of human rights.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs
Ninth Report**

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the Ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in Room 254 of the Legislative Building:

- *October 23, 2017*
- *October 24, 2017*

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 24) – The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 sur la réduction du fardeau administratif et l'efficacité du gouvernement**

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the October 23, 2017 meeting:

- *Mr. ALLUM*
- *HON. MR. EICHLER*

- HON. MR. FRIESEN
- HON. MR. GERRARD
- MR. GRAYDON
- MRS. GUILLEMARD
- MR. LINDSEY
- MR. MARTIN
- MR. REYES
- MR. SWAN
- MR. YAKIMOSKI

Your Committee elected Mrs. Guillemard as the Chairperson at the October 23, 2017 meeting.

Your Committee elected Mr. Martin as the Vice-Chairperson at the October 23, 2017 meeting.

Committee Membership for the October 24, 2017 meeting:

- MR. ALLUM
- HON. MR. CULLEN
- HON. MR. FRIESEN
- HON. MR. GERRARD
- MRS. GUILLEMARD (CHAIRPERSON)
- MR. HELWER
- MR. LINDSEY
- MR. MARTIN (VICE-CHAIRPERSON)
- MR. REYES
- MRS. SMITH (POINT DOUGLAS)
- MR. SMITH (SOUTHDALE)

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

Non-Committee Members speaking on the record at the October 24, 2017 meeting:

- Mr. Kinew

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following fifty-four presentations on **Bill (No. 24)** – *The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 sur la réduction du fardeau administratif et l'efficacité du gouvernement*:

October 23, 2017 meeting

George Matheson, Manitoba Pork Council
 Peter Williams, Private Citizen
 Ralph Groening, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Justin Jenner, Keystone Agricultural Producers
 Dennis Hodgkinson, DGH Engineering Ltd.
 Michael Stainton, Lake Winnipeg Foundation
 Scott Dick and Cliff Loewen (by leave), Agra-Gold Consulting Ltd.
 Michelle Gawronsky, MGEU – Manitoba Government and General Employees Union
 Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour
 Hugh Arklie, Private Citizen
 Janine Gibson, The Organic Food Council of Manitoba
 Grant Rigby, Private Citizen
 Jennifer Demare, Private Citizen
 Edward Stahl Jr., Private Citizen
 Jeroen Van Boekel, Private Citizen
 Arian DeBekker, The Independent Hog Farmers Coop
 Andrew Dickson, Private Citizen
 Jonathan Alward, Canadian Federation of Independent Business
 Eric Reder, Wilderness Committee
 Glen Koroluk, Free Range Worker Cooperative
 William Gould, Private Citizen
 David Nickarz, Private Citizen
 Mike Teillet, Private Citizen
 Derek Brewin, Private Citizen

October 24, 2017 meeting

Glen Gratton & Tricia Schmalenberg (by leave), Maple Leaf Industries
 Accalia Robertson, Private Citizen
 Sheldon Stott, Private Citizen
 Glenda Whiteman, Private Citizen
 Brittany Semeniuk, Winnipeg Humane Society
 Gaile Whelan-Enns, Private Citizen
 Margaret Rempel, Private Citizen
 Grand Chief Jerry Daniels, Southern Chiefs Organization
 Lyame Cypres, Private Citizen
 Johannes Soer, Private Citizen
 Mike Sutherland, Peguis First Nation
 Pita Hoyt, Private Citizen
 Weldon Newton, Private Citizen
 Vicki Burns, Private Citizen
 Ruth Pryzner, Private Citizen
 Kristin Luhn-Jensen, Private Citizen
 Kelly Whelan-Enns, Private Citizen
 Louise May, Aurora Farm
 Kristaps Balodis, Private Citizen
 Marianne Cerilli, Private Citizen
 Kevin Toyne, Private Citizen
 Debbie Wall, Private Citizen
 Don Flaten, Private Citizen

Anne Lindsey, Private Citizen
 Michele Rogalsky, University of Manitoba
 Gord Delbridge, CUPE Local 500
 Terry Egan, CUPE Manitoba
 James Beddome, Green Party of Manitoba
 Terry Wachniak, Private Citizen
 Dr. M.J. Willard, Private Citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following thirteen written submissions on **Bill (No. 24) – The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 sur la réduction du fardeau administratif et l'efficacité du gouvernement:**

Lynn Murphy, Private Citizen
 Carl Epp, Parkland Tree Care Ltd.
 Matt Vinet, International Society of Arboriculture
 Carla Antonation, Trilog Tree Services
 Jesse Antonation, Arboriculture Canada Training
 Gerry Engel, Trees Winnipeg
 Harold Froese, Private Citizen
 Moe Feakes, Private Citizen
 Cory Rybuck, Manitoba Egg Farmers
 Ardythe Basham, Private Citizen
 Robert G Mears, Private Citizen
 Elizabeth Cameron, Private Citizen
 Molly McCracken, Private Citizen

Bill Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 24) – The Red Tape Reduction and Government Efficiency Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 sur la réduction du fardeau administratif et l'efficacité du gouvernement**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, without amendment, on a counted vote of 6 Yeas, 4 Nays.

Mrs. Guillemard: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Madam Speaker: I am pleased to table, in accordance with sections 14(4) and 28 of The Auditor General Act, the Auditor General's report on Managing Climate Change.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Sustainable Development, and 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 please proceed with her statement.

Climate Change Report– Auditor General's Findings

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Earlier today, the office of the Auditor General released its report on the provincial government's lack of action and core management of climate change under the previous administration.

The findings of the Auditor General's report are very alarming. The report indicates that despite a global focus on addressing climate change, Manitoba has seen little change in greenhouse gas emissions over the past decade. Inaction and a lack of engagement on this issue have long-lasting and negative effects on our province.

The Auditor General found significant gaps in managing climate change and in following targets the previous administration had imposed by legislation. Specifically, it criticized that there was no plan developed for actually adapting to climate change impacts. The previous government was aware by 2009 that its plan to reduce emissions would not work, and it failed to update it.

The report highlights the importance for our government to act where previous leadership failed. Our government will move forward with a made-in-Manitoba approach to addressing climate change that will produce meaningful—that will meaningfully reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the environmental health and sustainability of our province for future generations.

Our government's plan will be geared towards the environmental, economic and social realities of Manitoba, rather than just following a one-size-fits-all approach proposed by the federal government and members opposite. Our government will propose a comprehensive, realistic and workable climate and green plan with a bold new vision

for a clean and green Manitoba. It will make Manitoba Canada's cleanest, greenest and most climate-resistant province. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I want to thank the Auditor General and their office for the work that they do holding all parties in the House accountable for actions taken or not taken. And, to take one of the minister's comments and expand on it a bit, to actually have Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions be more or less unchanged for a decade is an indication of the results this government achieved simply because, under the previous—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —government, emissions were increasing by almost 200,000 tons per year.

So Manitoba, under our leadership, was actually part of a global trend which was flattening the emissions of—greenhouse gas emissions. And now the next step—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —quite clearly, is for those emissions to be reduced.

And that did not occur by accident, Madam Speaker. That took a lot of hard work. A number of the things that our government did, which—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —this government could certainly consider expanding upon, would be rapid expansion of the Power Smart program, which this government has now undermined and not replaced with its new Efficiency Manitoba. We also required the City of Winnipeg to capture methane out of the landfill. We only had to do this because the mayor refused to do it. And we also built the first two commercial wind farms in Manitoba.

There's a large number of initiatives our government took and we look forward to holding this government accountable—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

* (13:40)

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, understanding and addressing climate change is important for Manitoba and important for our planet.

In spite of much rhetoric by the previous NDP government there was little progress as the plans that were put in place were hampered by inadequate analysis, lack of implementation details and weak progress monitoring.

A climate change plan should be comprehensive, with targeted reductions in the three principal greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. The latter two, largely from agriculture, were mostly forgotten by the previous government, and agriculture makes up a third of Manitoba's greenhouse gasses.

It's to be hoped that the present government will be more knowledgeable when it comes to agriculture and will have a more robust effort in this area. What is striking to me is that in a year and a half we've had little progress from this government. Instead, Madam Speaker, we're—hear this Premier (Mr. Pallister) fighting the federal government again.

The environment is the water we drink, the land we live on and the air we breathe. The government needs to start taking responsibility for its lack of action and develop and implement an effective greenhouse gas reduction plan. The Premier should stop pointing fingers at others. This was a plan he promised more than a year and a half ago.

I say to the government: stop acting like the NDP; make a plan and deliver it.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: On a point of order, the honourable member for The Maples.

Mr. Saran: Madam Speaker, I am tabling documents I referred to during my member's statement on October 23rd, 2017.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate to the member and—tell him that that is not a point of order. But we do appreciate his putting forward the tabling of some of his documents.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 215

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, it's an honour to welcome members of the Royal Canadian Legion Henderson Highway Branch No. 215 to the Legislature this afternoon.

Remembrance Day is quickly approaching, and it's an occasion most people associate with the Royal Canadian Legion.

Today, Madam Speaker, I want to highlight the year-round efforts of Branch No. 215 and its dedicated members, who tirelessly volunteer their time to support veterans in our community.

While Branch No. 215 hosts a number of events, such as the veterans' dinner and the fun-filled Canada Day celebration, what truly is remarkable is all of the Legion's volunteers and the extraordinary work that they quietly do behind the scenes, like the members of the Joint Hospital Visiting Committee, who ensure that veterans living in personal-care homes receive monthly visits. And while it's mostly about bringing a smile, the volunteers always show up each visit with a special gift, like chocolates, to brighten their day.

Branch No. 215 also works hard to support critical medical research, and since 2009 the branch's poppy fund has contributed nearly \$13,000 to the hip and knee research through the Concordia Joint

Replacement Group. It's truly a valuable gift that benefits our entire community and well beyond.

These selfless volunteers aren't looking for thanks or recognition, but, personally, I believe they're heroes.

We can't thank you enough for all you do. You have dedicated your lives to protecting the freedom we enjoy in Canada and you continue to enrich the fabric of our communities through your tremendous volunteer efforts.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me today and giving their sincere appreciation to all of the legal—the Legion members for their hard work and dedicated service, not just leading up to Remembrance Day, but throughout the entire year.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Mrs. Cox: I would ask for leave to have the names of the executive inserted into Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have those names inserted into Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Royal Canadian Legion Henderson Highway Branch No. 215 Executive. Branch Executive Officers: President, Gord Machej (April); 1st Vice-President, Beverly Stem (Tim); 2nd Vice-President/Secretary, Lori Gagnon (Claude); Chairman, Ted Nimik (Sandy); Treasurer, Bodo Roloff (Anne Marie); Padre/Chaplin, Ted Nimik (Sandy); Sergeant-at-Arms, Alex Mills (Lois); Past President, Nicole Napoleone (Sal). Executive Committee Members, 2017-2018: Claude Gagnon (Lori); Lionel Bjornson (Sherry); April Machej (Gord); Diane Tashe; Bob Morrison. Executive Committee Members, 2016-2017: Fred Wilson (Vera); Elmer Broschuk (Louella); Bob Neault; Andre Camara (Daphine). Ladies Auxiliary: President, Lori Gagnon; Kitchen Convener, Louella Broschuk; Co-Kitchen Convener, Vera Margerison.

Westwood Collegiate Band Awards

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I recently had the privilege of attending Westwood Collegiate's fall awards ceremony in Kirkfield Park constituency.

At this ceremony I had the privilege to witness a large number of students be recognized for a variety of outstanding achievements. One of the more noteworthy achievements celebrated at the awards

ceremony was the success of Westwood band music program.

Each year, Winnipeg attracts close to 170 bands to the Optimist International Band Festival, which is held at the end of February. Last year, Westwood Collegiate's grade 9 concert band, grade 10 concert band and grade 10 and 11 symphonic band all received perfect marks. In addition to all the Westwood Collegiate's jazz ensembles, the junior jazz, the intermediate jazz and senior jazz, all received invitations to compete at the nationals in Niagara Falls, Madam Speaker.

While at the nationals in Niagara Falls, the vocal jazz assembly won a very respective silver medal and student Carter Kennington was also recognized for the outstanding singing. Senior jazz was named one of the top jazz ensembles in the country and bass player Carter LaFleche also was recognized as a bass player. In addition to all these important accomplishments, drummer Aidan Clarke was named as the overall top drummer of the festival and has received drum set from the Pearl Canada for his efforts.

These students are clearly—have worked extremely hard on their craft, and I'm ecstatic too, that I was invited to the awards ceremony to share in the important day for them.

I'd like to recognize all the students at Westwood Collegiate that were recognized in the band program and the individual awards on behalf of the constituents of Kirkfield Park.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

West Lynn Heights Students' Questions for Government

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Recently I was given a list of questions from the grade 6, 7 class of the West Lynn Heights School in the community of Lynn Lake. The students' questions shed a harsh light on the realities that that community is facing, and I'd like to table that list of questions now.

One question asks, why can't we drink the water? Lynn Lake has been under a boil water advisory for many years. Health workers at the town's centre have reported serious health issues in children that they believe are related to the water. Lynn Lake needs safe drinking water systems so kids don't have to worry about drinking from the tap.

Another question asks, can we please have mental health facilities? Isolated communities like

Lynn Lake have a steady rising rate of mental illness due to the absence of enough treatment beds, daytime services and a lack of a hopeful future. Cuts to clinics in The Pas and Thompson mean quality mental health care is even further out of reach for these children.

Yet another question asks, why don't we have usable ball and soccer fields and recreation arenas? Northern families and youth need to have safe places to have fun and get active.

Many in Lynn Lake are working tirelessly to create a brighter future for their children and I commend those volunteers for the hope they're bringing to their community. Provincial government cannot ignore communities like Lynn Lake.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) help me write answers back to the students at West Lynn Heights that show a real commitment to their futures? He can take action so that kids can stop worrying what will happen to their families and go back to being kids.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Envol 91 FM—25th Anniversary

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Madame la présidente, cette semaine marque la fin des célébrations du 25^e anniversaire de la radio communautaire francophone du Manitoba, Envol 91 FM. Étant donné sa désignation comme première station de radio communautaire française dans l'Ouest canadien, c'est vraiment quelque chose à célébrer.

La communauté francophone du Manitoba voulait instituer une station de radio communautaire pour refléter sa diversité culturelle. Grâce aux efforts de nombreuses personnes et organisations déterminées, la Radio communautaire du Manitoba fut créée.

Depuis le 21 octobre 1991, Envol diffuse à plus de 90% des communautés francophones du Manitoba, et plus de 50 bénévoles aident à organiser et à produire la programmation d'Envol. Envol est la voix de la francophonie manitobaine, offrant une variété de genres musicaux. Aussi, Envol est une plateforme où les artistes francophones locaux sont célébrés. La programmation est toujours ciblée pour répondre aux besoins des 'auditeurs', et aide à développer un sens d'appartenance à la communauté.

Au cours de la dernière année, Envol a célébré son succès en diffusant de nombreuses émissions et événements spéciaux partout au Manitoba.

L'événement final d'Envol servant à terminer une année de célébration constituait une opportunité pour remercier et reconnaître les bénévoles pour leur contribution.

Aujourd'hui, je tiens à féliciter Jonas Desrosiers, président de la radio, et Yaya Doumbia, directeur général de la radio, qui sont avec nous aujourd'hui, ainsi que tout autre membre du personnel et les bénévoles d'Envol 91 FM pour leur immense contribution. La francophonie en entier avons hâte de voir ce que les prochaines 25 années apporteront.

Merci Madame.

Translation

Madam Speaker, this week marks the end of the 25th anniversary celebrations for Manitoba's Francophone community radio station, Envol 91.1 FM. Given its status as the first French-language community radio station in western Canada, it really is something to celebrate.

Manitoba's Francophone community wanted a community radio station that would reflect its cultural diversity. Thanks to the efforts of many determined individuals and organizations, the community radio station became a reality. Envol 91.1 has been broadcasting to over 90% of Manitoba's Francophone communities since October 21, 1991, and over 50 volunteers help plan and produce its programming. It is the voice of Manitoba's Francophonie, and offers a variety of musical genres. Envol is also a platform that celebrates local Francophone artists. Programming is always tailored to listeners' preferences and to help cultivate a sense of belonging in the community.

During the past year, Envol celebrated its success by broadcasting many programs and holding special events throughout Manitoba. Envol's final event, capping a year of celebration, provided an opportunity to thank and acknowledge the volunteers for their contribution.

I would like to congratulate Envol's President, Jonas Desrosiers, and Executive Director, Yaya Doumbia, who are here with us today, as well as the staff and volunteers for their immense contribution. Manitoba's Francophonie looks forward to seeing what the next 25 years will bring.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—oh, the honourable member for St. Boniface.

* (13:50)

Mr. Selinger: I seek leave to enter the names of all the people listed in the member's statement in the Hansard today, please.

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

Envol staff and volunteers: Jonas Desrosiers, président; Françoise Therrien Vrignon, vice président; Yaya Doumbia, CEO; Diane Doney; Moutari Arouna; Joel Martine; Evelynne Lachapelle; Jean-Sébastien Coté-Paré; Renaud Doucet; Larbi Toumi

Acknowledgements from Member for Assiniboia

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to thank the people of Assiniboia for their tremendous amount of support over the last year and a half and, in particular, I want to thank the Premier (Mr. Pallister) for allowing me the opportunity to serve and represent the people of Assiniboia by allowing me to be a Conservative. Not only am I now facing the government, which, by the way, Madam Speaker, is a much better-looking group, collectively, than looking the other way, but it does allow me the opportunity to be a Conservative.

We were elected on a platform based on conservative values, but that does not include creating a new Crown corporation, does not include creating red tape for Crown corporations like MPI, or the taxi industry, or creating unworkable and costly changes to the taxi industry. It does not include increasing the cost of home-heating gasses for the people in social housing in my riding.

How am I going to explain to people in social housing where they're going to put their subsidized solar panels in their apartments? There is no way that that is good public policy for the people in economic need.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I do want to thank my caregivers who have provided great service and I'd like to thank everyone for bringing them into this Chamber.

However, there are occasions—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: I ask for leave for the member to finish his statement.

Madam Speaker: Oh, is there leave for the member to conclude his statement? *[Agreed]*

The honourable member for Assiniboia, to quickly conclude his statement.

Mr. Fletcher: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My caregivers are there to help, but they're not political aides. If there's frustration, I ask my colleagues and their guests please do not take it out on my caregivers. This has happened and it's not appropriate and it's wrong. They just don't need that. Take it out on me, please. I enjoy it.

You guys are great fun to talk with and stuff, but my caregivers—please leave it out—leave them out of it.

But, thanks, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the people of Manitoba for the opportunity to be here.

Introduction of Guests

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

Located to my left in the loge is the former MLA for St. Vital, Nancy Allan, and we welcome her back to the Legislature.

And also seated in the public gallery from Immanuel Christian School we have 38 grade 6 students under the direction of Jim Spoelstra, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Occupational and Physiotherapy Services Request to Rescind Outpatient Service Cuts

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): We heard loud and clear yesterday that the Premier is planning to make more cuts to the health-care system. We know that his plans for cuts hurt Manitoba families, and when they look to this House they seem to see a government that doesn't care.

The WRHA has announced it will lay off nearly 30 outpatient physiotherapists to meet the government's demand for cuts. Those health-care professionals serve some 3,000 Manitobans each year, which means that there could be up to 10,000 visits lost as a result of these cuts.

Now, the Premier's order to cut costs may save money today, but we know that it will cost us more in the long term with repeat hospitalizations,

potentially even repeat surgeries. Will the Premier rescind his decision to cut physiotherapy and occupational therapy outpatient services?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, half a billion dollars of additional investment in health care, Madam Speaker, could hardly accurately be described as a cut. It is a record investment in health care for the benefit of Manitobans, and a focused investment that was never focused under the previous administration.

But I would assure the member that, if he were to consult with experts that we trust to give us advice—in fact, the previous administration under the NDP trusted them to give them advice, too—if he chose to listen to them and to objectively ascertain their qualifications and the recommendations they make, he might change his mind.

Here's a quote from Dr. David Peachey: a failure to change will diminish the overall impact of the clinical and preventative services planning and impair the ability to meet patient needs in Manitoba. Change is necessary; it's difficult, Madam Speaker. I know the member is trying to change himself. He needs to also change his attitude in terms of accepting the need to fix the system of health care in our province.

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

Mr. Kinew: The question was about physiotherapy, and what the experts tell us is that after knee surgery patients need physiotherapy in order to be able to complete their recovery. If not, they risk reinjury. If they're reinjured, that impacts their quality of life in a very, very severe way, but it also places a greater burden on our health-care system if they need to visit the emergency room again. We just need to remind the Premier that delivering care at someone's home is much more effective, and also cost efficient, than delivering care in the emergency room.

So this is the crux of the matter, here. The reason we're pursuing this route is because the Premier has ordered over \$100 million in cuts. So what more impacts will we see across the health-care system? What more hospitalizations and repeat surgeries will be required? What evidence does this Premier have that compares the impact of the cuts to physiotherapy to the impact of repeat hospitalizations for those affected?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the evidence would be in the research, Madam Speaker, commissioned by the previous administration, but ignored. A lack of courage to act on recommendations from qualified people, Manitobans included, caused the situation to worsen, caused the system to become broken.

The member speaks about compassion but fails to recognize that having the longest emergency-care waits in the country of Canada is hardly a demonstration of compassion. Mismanagement under the previous administration hurt people. It hurt people badly across this province. It created fear, it created doubt, it created pain.

Madam Speaker, we will heal that pain by listening to the experts.

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

Mr. Kinew: We know that it is the Premier who is causing pain for those who depend on our health-care system. We've established in this House that it is the Premier sitting at the Cabinet table who sets the directive for the cuts that are being made to the health-care services that Manitoba families rely on.

You know, he's decided that families and patients who don't have health insurance are going to have to scale back on, you know, the other areas of life that they enjoy because they will have to shoulder that burden themselves. That's the situation that this Premier is forcing on Manitobans, and yet when they look to this Chamber, they seem to see a government that doesn't care. Now, the Premier may not like the terrible choice that he is forcing on Manitobans, but he also has a choice: he can put care first.

Will he reverse these cuts and ensure physiotherapy and occupational outpatient services remain publicly funded?

*(14:00)

Mr. Pallister: Although the member opposite will not take responsibility nor accept responsibility for his administration's breaking of the system, Madam Speaker, we do accept the responsibility of fixing the system. We will do that.

And, Madam Speaker, he speaks of care but fails to recognize the pain that has been caused by the pure mismanagement of the previous administration: wait times for hip replacements, eighth of 10 in the

country; knee replacement, eighth of 10; cataract surgery, 10th of 10; emergency wait times, dead last.

Madam Speaker, the system they broke will be fixed by this government.

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

Affordable Post-Secondary Education Need for Financial Supports for Students

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question, an affordable education is key to success in life, but there are too many young people who face barriers to accessing education in our province. And, unfortunately, this Premier's actions are making it harder and harder for those young people to get ahead, start a family and put down roots in our province.

Instead of helping them, he's cut the tuition tax rebate for students and recent grads. That's a \$50-million hit to youth. Now he is raising tuition fees by up to 7 per cent a year. That's potentially thousands of dollars more for a young person to receive a post-secondary education.

Now, the Premier should know that cutting education hurts our youth and threatens the long-term economic health of our province.

Will he stop the cuts to our education system? Will he choose to invest in post-secondary education in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Of course we are. And the member fails to recognize that we are investing over \$400 million more in this year alone in education than the NDP government previously ever did.

But, Madam Speaker, we're not just concerned with spending more, as the previous administration seemed to be. We are focused on getting better results. We're also focused on making sure that the barriers to entry for post-secondary study are reduced, not raised, as they were under the previous administration.

We're also concerned with making sure that the scholarship and bursary funding available to those who need assistance, such as I did, Madam Speaker, when I came from a modest family background and was able to attend university—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —and continue my studies thanks to the generosity of government programs, in part.

I—Madam Speaker, I want to assure the member that we care deeply about making sure those barriers, which they raised in their administration's time in office, are reduced under our time in office.

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

Mr. Kinew: The biggest barrier to education, for many, is tuition, which this Premier is raising. He also froze operating grants to every post-secondary—except for those whose operating grants that he cut.

What's more, beyond impacting all the students in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson and St. Boniface, we know, because of what these government documents reveal, that the Premier's program for scholarships and bursaries has only raised \$1.8 million to the end of September. That's \$1.8 million in the past six months. That's the government's own number. I would table these documents so the Premier could review them.

Now, the Premier's claims that \$20 million will be available for students in scholarships and bursaries this year is spin. One point eight million—those are the facts, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier admit that he needs to have more supports for students and not less?

Mr. Pallister: Well, not only will I admit that, Madam Speaker, but I will commit to that, and we are doing that as a government.

The member fails to acknowledge, as he too frequently does, Madam Speaker, the failure of the previous administration to provide opportunities for needy young people: the reduced rates of graduation, for example, for young indigenous students in our post-secondary institutions; the increased challenges posed for students and their families of additional taxes put on them.

Tuition is one factor, but there are many others, Madam Speaker. In particular for rural and northern youth who have to travel, that is a barrier as well, and certainly the costs imposed on families across the province by the previous administration in terms of additional taxes on home insurance and on benefits for their—the parents of students at work are barriers that were real, and the member needs to acknowledge them.

Anyone with compassion would acknowledge that the financial barriers placed in front of students are certainly largely the responsibility of the previous administration's high-tax policies, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Premier is failing to meet the benchmarks that he has set for himself. The metric that he set out was \$20 million; they're only at \$1.8 million. You do the math with the matching funds, that gets you to 2.7, but 13.5 per cent of your way towards your goal—that's a failing grade, Madam Speaker. Time is running short, and affordable education is too important to have to wait years for this Premier to get his act together.

Will the Premier commit today to making post-secondary education more affordable for students and families by committing more resources directly to help them get their educations?

Mr. Pallister: I can only hope, Madam Speaker, that our high school graduates' performance in mathematics can improve, and certainly the member's miscalculations in his numbers demonstrate that his math skills need to improve as well.

The reality is that we are committing to reduce the barriers for needy students for post-secondary education. This is critically important to me, not coming from a silver-spoon background myself, Madam Speaker. I have had the opportunity to work my way through school—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —I've had—like many in this Chamber, I've had the opportunity to work my way through a post-secondary degree with the help of some assistance from bursary and scholarship. I've always been thankful for that. I thank the Manitoba Teachers' Society, in fact, for one of those very important scholarships at a critical time in my life, and I want to make sure that students in our province have those barriers reduced, that they are not raised as they were during the time of the previous NDP government.

Affordable Post-Secondary Education Need for Financial Supports for Students

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): With Bill 30 coming to committee tonight, we know that the Pallister government is dead set on raising the cost of tuition for students by thousands, and yet we've just learned

that they aren't even close to meeting their own targets, let alone meeting the real need for students and their financial supports that they need. Students are worried. The tuition is set to go up, and the government is taking away supports, yet the only action that we've seen from this government has been an ad campaign designed to sell these cuts to students, all the while knowing that the money will fall short of what is needed.

Why is this minister failing to properly support Manitoba students and parents?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Our government is very pleased to be working with private industry and post-secondary institutions to put in place a scholarship and bursary initiative that is sustainable and that increases the amount of money that is available to students in Manitoba.

You're looking at numbers that come out in the middle of a fiscal year. Really, that's really not appropriate economy as to how money is managed, but I can understand that, coming from the NDP. They simply don't understand economics. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wiebe: Additional government documents obtained through freedom of information reveal that the Pallister government is in fact spending tens of thousands of dollars on an advertising campaign to try to persuade Manitoba students that higher tuition wouldn't be a barrier for them, and I'll table those now. And worst of all, Madam Speaker, what these documents reveal is that the funding for this spin came directly out of the operating budget for Manitoba Student Aid—in other words, money that should be going directly to students to pay for their tuition.

Madam Speaker, why is this government spending Student Aid dollars on political spin rather than on students?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for his question. I guess he doesn't want the students to know about the additional funding through Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative. I assume, then, he is not really worried about those students being well informed and having access to additional funds that are available through that program. Awareness of a

program is an absolute necessity for a program to be successful and to help those very same students. That's what we're doing.

* (14:10)

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, students won't be fooled by the spin. They know that a tone-deaf government ad campaign doesn't help pay their tuition bill. It doesn't buy a book for school. They can see that this government is wasting tens of thousands of dollars of Student Aid money on a desperate attempt to cover up a tuition hike that nobody—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —voted for. That's real money, Madam Speaker, that should be going to students, not for social media ad blitzes.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: With tuition and fees set to go up, interest on student loans rising, student debt going up, with Student Aid falling short, Madam Speaker, will the government just stop taking money from students and actually commit to keeping tuition affordable in this province?

Mr. Wishart: Our government is definitely committed to a long-term, sustainable post-secondary education program in this province. We're very pleased to participate not only in scholarship and bursary initiatives that have been expanded well beyond anything the previous government ever dreamed of, but we're also pleased—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: —to be part of a colleges review that they, frankly, never got around to and should have done 10 years ago, so Manitoba students were suffering from their lack of attention in post-secondary.

Mental Health Services Future of Treatment Options

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mental health services are vital to the well-being of our communities.

The Health Minister has hand-picked a consultant, Dr. Brian Rush, to report on Manitoba's

mental health services. We've learned that Dr. Rush has a history of recommending fewer services and less support for people living with mental illness. He did so in Ontario, and a similar report in Nova Scotia recommended the government close long-term-care beds and even a treatment centre for people living with severe mental illness. He also recommended closing three detox units.

Why did the minister hire a consultant with a track record of recommending the closure of the very services that Manitobans need?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): We certainly know that there is a need for additional mental health services. We've made that expression clear to the federal government. The member for Minto never stood up with us when we were speaking to the federal 'g'ivimabout'—government about having more support for mental health and a number of other different areas, Madam Speaker.

We have a consultant out in the field to bring together the mental health and the addiction side of the department. That hadn't happen before. We know there's a correlation between the two.

We look forward to his report. We look forward to hearing the recommendations and looking to how we can better the system that didn't get better under 15 years of the former government, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Carol Ward, the mother of a woman who passed away from a drug overdose, believes more long-term residential beds would've saved her daughter Lisa's life.

Tara Brousseau Snider, executive director of Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba, says while day programs can be part of the solution they cannot replace residential programs that care for the chronically ill.

We've already seen that this minister and this Premier (Mr. Pallister) favour cuts over care.

Why did the minister hire someone to tell him to cut long-term mental health and addictions beds?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I'll give the member opposite credit for one thing: he is correct that under the former government there did grow a great deficit in the number of facilities that we have, whether it's, of course, day programs or residential

programs. That happened over many, many years under the former government.

In fact, we know that they were spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to send people out of province to get treatment in residential facilities. That's why we're working to repurpose those dollars so they'll be back here in Manitoba and increase— increase—the options that people have in Manitoba for residential care, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, Madam Speaker, this minister hired the wrong consultant for this job. His Nova Scotia recommendations have many in that province concerned. A member of the Legislature there, John Lohr, had a dire warning for Manitobans to not accept the loss of in-patient services. And that member called the conclusions a cost-saving measure that ignored valuable treatment options.

Mr. Lohr is a Progressive Conservative MLA in Nova Scotia, Madam Speaker.

Manitobans are suffering from the first wave of health cuts by this minister. They're angry and they're concerned. They're waiting for some sign this government's concerned about anything other than the bottom line.

Will the minister today commit to expanding, and not reducing, the number of treatment beds for Manitobans living with a mental illness?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member opposite, when he was the minister responsible for Manitoba Public Insurance, had a long history of hiring consultants.

In fact, I remember he hired Marilyn McLaren as a consultant for Manitoba Public Insurance after she had left the corporation. We had a very interesting committee one evening, Madam Speaker, where I quizzed the minister and I quizzed those who were at the committee and asked what exactly is Marilyn McLaren getting for the consulting that she did, the \$50,000. Finally, the minister—the former minister had to admit that she never—that he never actually expected her to do any work. He hired a consultant to do absolutely no work.

We're not doing that. We're going to better the system, Madam Speaker.

Elections Amendment Act Changes to Voter ID Law

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Tonight we get to hear from Manitobans how the minister's sweeping changes to The Elections Amendment Act will make it harder for them to exercise their democratic rights.

Bill 27 entrenches regressive laws on voter identification, effectively cutting off Manitoba's most vulnerable citizens from the voting process. Low income, newcomers, persons with disabilities and some indigenous families will see their rights eliminated with the stroke of the minister's pen.

These committees may get their last interaction with the democratic process at committee tonight.

Will the minister reverse the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) plan now, before it's too late?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, I want to thank the member for the question, and certainly I look forward to hearing from Manitobans this evening at committee and hearing their views and what they think about this legislation.

But what this legislation does is bring us up to speed with the rest of Canada and in—when it comes to voting. And—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —we think it's the right way to go. And that's why we are introducing this. And that's—we look forward to the passage of the bill after listening to those at committee tonight.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The Premier claims that this policy is born out of widespread voter fraud in Manitoba, but there is no evidence to support this. Manitobans' current electoral system works well, and there have been steps made to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —improve voting processes. A democratic electoral system like Manitoba's should prioritize increasing access to voters rather than disenfranchising citizens, especially those that already face a myriad of obstacles for voting.

Will the minister admit her Premier's policy is backwards and completely out-of-touch approach to Manitoba's democracy?

Mrs. Stefanson: In fact, this will be very good for Manitobans. We know in other provinces it's increased with—by introducing a voter registry it's increased the number of people on the eligible voter list significantly from 75 per cent to 93 per cent—or 97 per cent in BC.

So we believe this is a good thing. This is a great way to get more Manitobans to vote.

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

Ms. Fontaine: That's, of course, if you don't miss them.

So the Premier is lifting straight out of the Republican Party playbook with this regressive and exclusionary policy. By manufacturing a voter fraud crisis that doesn't actually exist, it makes it harder to hear the voices of marginalized groups. What does exist, however, is a sad history of attempts at election rigging by the Premier's own party.

Does the minister think Manitoba really needs these regressive, American-voting-style policies, and will she withdraw legislation today?

* (14:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: Certainly, the Chief Electoral Officer has asked for these reforms for many, many years. Members opposite refused to listen to the Chief Electoral Officer; they refused to listen to Manitobans.

We know that other provinces has gone there. We're one of the last jurisdictions in Canada to implement this. This is the right thing to do. It will provide more access for more Manitobans to vote, and that is a good thing for Manitobans.

Local Vehicles for Hire Act Impact on Taxi Industry

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Yesterday, at committee on Bill 30, The Local Vehicles for Hire Act, we had some incredible people who came out and they all spoke strongly against the bill. Those who came out had fantastic questions. Unfortunately, they weren't answered.

So allow me to ask here: Madam Speaker, if this government truly felt that Bill 30 was a good idea, then why would there be a clause that specifically takes away the rights of Manitobans to challenge the bill? Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): And I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. I'd also like to thank the over 80-plus Manitobans that came out for the last two evenings, providing their input and ideas, Madam Speaker, in committee—truly an example of democracy in action.

Madam Speaker, unlike members opposite, including the Liberals, our government continues to consult with Manitobans and we are looking forward to the other hearings coming up within the next two days.

I ask members opposite: do the right thing. Get on board. Make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am proud of our province because of our diversity. I am proud that people from all over the world choose to move to Canada with the hopes of building a life here for themselves and their families.

Yesterday, a first-year university student shared his family's story with us. He explained how if Bill 30 is passed, not only will his father lose his job, but there will not be food to feed his family and he would likely be forced to drop out of school.

Madam Speaker, this is shameful. How can this government justify putting families at risk?

Mr. Wharton: Madam Speaker, I'd like to table a letter from the Winnipeg Airports Authority, and I'd like to quote: Today's current system is failing to meet the needs of our customers. As Manitobans' largest taxi stand, far too often we see lineups for people waiting for taxis when they land in Winnipeg. For many people, this is the first time and the first impression of our city. While it is understandable, Madam Speaker, that minor waits can be expected in severe weather conditions, there is no reason passengers should wait on the curb.

Madam Speaker, that was signed by the CEO, Barry Rempel, Winnipeg Airports Authority.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Many at committee last night expressed the concern of the safety of Manitobans if Bill 30 is passed. This fear is so real that we had

people in committee last night tearing up from the stories that were being shared with us.

Currently, taxicab safety standards include shields, panic buttons, strobe lights, police criminal record checks, and cameras that are only accessible by the police.

Would the minister make sure that ride-sharing companies would have to meet the same security standards as taxicabs in order to keep Manitobans safe?

Mr. Wharton: And, again, I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

The NDP commissioned—or spent \$100,000 to hire Meyers Norris Penny and bring a report forward. The report recommended significant modernization to the industry and asked the province to consider whether these decisions would better serve Winnipeggers at the local level, Madam Speaker.

The NDP commissioned this report, recognizing the need for change in the regulatory framework, Madam Speaker, and this is something that we agree on.

Fear mongering is going to be done by this party opposite. We are going to do the right thing for Manitobans. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Estate Tax Proposal Government Position

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): The NDP leader, with his first major policy proposal, has suggested introducing a death tax. This takes us back 40 years, a policy that was relegated to the dustbin by both the federal and provincial governments back in 1970—in the 1970s, rather, when I was just a toddler. The NDP want to take our—Manitoba and our economy backwards with higher taxes and with crushing regulations.

Can the Minister of Finance outline for us why this NDP death tax is a bad idea and what this government is going to do to help keep taxes low, grow the economy and create jobs?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for Radisson for the question.

It was just weeks ago when the Leader of the Opposition stood and said it's interesting what the federal government is leaving out—no changes to

estate taxes, where wealth is handed down from one generation to the next.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's proposed death tax would be a punishing tax on all Manitoba families, takes money out of the pockets of Manitobans just because one of their—a spouse or relative has passed away, and it couldn't come at a worse time, on the heels of the federal Liberal proposed changes to small corporations' tax. These are backward ideas, and they show a fundamental lack of understanding for how our economy works.

Our government will stand up for lower taxes. Our government will stand up for Manitoba families. We have indexed the tax brackets; we have raised the basic personal exemption and we're just getting started.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Inuit Art Centre Funding Intention

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, on October the 11th, I asked the Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage about funding for the Inuit Art Centre. We learned a lot from her answers about the truly wonderful Canada Summer Games, but nothing about the Inuit Art Centre.

Can the minister please tell the House if her government is going to contribute its fair share to fund the Inuit centre?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I would like to thank the member opposite for that important question.

Our government has displayed a very important commitment to indigenous art and Inuit art as well, and as a matter of fact, we fund 39 per cent of the funding to the Winnipeg Art Gallery, so that's quite significant.

And I would just also like to invite the member opposite and all members in the Chamber, actually, to take in the INSURGENCE/RESURGENCE exhibition that they are currently hosting at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, one of the largest exhibitions of that art in all of Canada, so I really encourage him to do that. What's also most interesting is the fact that the two curators are very brilliant indigenous women—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* Order.

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

Mr. Marcelino: The transition binder, that was provided to the new Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, that we obtained through FIPPA—the government said that they have a decision about the building of the Inuit Art Centre before the end of August. So do I get it that they are funding their fair share for the Inuit Art Centre or not? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cox: Thanks again to the member opposite.

I would just like to say that we've actually met with Stephen Borys from the Winnipeg Art Gallery and had very good, fulsome discussions with him with regard to funding and moving forward and sustainability, all of those very important things.

* (14:30)

But I'd also like to let the member opposite know that we do provide \$67 million of funding in grants and tax credits towards the arts, the cultural and the film and music industry—very significant—you know, which is in contrast to the members opposite, who actually cut \$4 million in 2014 from the film and music industry tax credit, which is such a booming industry, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Marcelino: On a totally different track now, last night, during the committee hearings of Bill 30, which is the vehicle for hire act, there were some horrendous scenes that we saw—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Is the member rising on a new question? Because supplementary questions are to be stated according to the initial topic that he raised. If he's now standing on a totally different topic, then he is moving on to a brand new question.

So can the member clarify for me, is this a final supplementary question or a brand new question?

Mr. Marcelino: It's a brand new question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On a new question—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a new question.

**Local Vehicles for Hire Act
Request to Withdraw Bill**

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox) also shed some tears regarding the presentation of a family who lost their dad, who was a taxi driver. And a taxi driver—now—the taxi drivers are now being hired by their mom who continued to operate their taxicab business.

And will the minister please ask the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to withdraw Bill 30?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question and also taking part in the democratic process over the last few days.

Safety was an issue that does—that did come up quite often during the process, Madam Speaker, and this government takes safety very seriously. We are continuing to consult with Manitobans. We are consulting with the industry. Unlike members opposite, we will continue to consult and get this right for Manitobans.

**Fisheries Envoy
Report Costs**

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I'm wondering if the minister would be willing to share with the House how much the fisheries envoy report cost. Thank you.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Today, the Auditor General released a scathing report on this—on the previous government's colossal failure on the management of the environment.

Madam Speaker, we have a lot of work to do, and our government is going to release a report in a few days on how we're going to protect the economy and protect the environment. And while we're doing the job that they failed to get done, I would ask members opposite to read the report from the Auditor General, reflect on that report and then get on board and support our initiatives as we continue to clean up the mess that they left behind.

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

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, Madam Speaker, true to form, we did not get an answer to the question asked. Not to worry, I have the answer.

I'd like to table in the House today, if I may, a document from the Department of Sustainable Development. Disclosure of contracts indicates the cost of this report was \$150,000.

The truly insulting part to this tragic story, Madam Speaker: the government has already told the envoys, who wrote the report in advance, they were not going to listen to anything they say.

How can this minister stand up and say her government, on the one hand, has no money for important services they are cutting, but they're more than willing to funnel this type of money for a useless exercise this government is not going to listen to?

Madam Speaker: The time for oral—oh, sorry.

Ms. Squires: And speaking of useless exercises, it was a complete, useless exercise when the previous administration released reports. They released targets they had absolutely no plan to achieve. When the Auditor General said to them that they were not on track to achieve their targets, what did they do? They shut the lights and they turned their back on the report. They had absolutely no intention of cleaning up the environment.

While we're cleaning up the environment, I suggest members opposite get on board.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto, on a point of order.

Order. Order, please.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): On a point of order.

I rise this afternoon regarding some unfortunate comments that were made by the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) in this afternoon's question period. This afternoon, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) was asking questions of the Attorney General (Mrs. Stefanson) about Bill 27 and concerns about voter suppression. And, unfortunately, the member for Emerson clearly said: I wouldn't want more people to vote in St. Johns.

As an inner-city MLA, I find it highly inappropriate that a member of this House, of this Legislature, would wish that people in this province not have the democratic right to vote. There are new Canadians, indigenous people and transient people. Many people do not have photo ID. And I hope—and we're all honourable members—I would like to give the government credit that what the member for Emerson said has nothing to do with government policy.

So I would ask the member for Emerson to stand today, apologize to the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) and apologize to the people of St. Johns for a clearly inappropriate comment, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Madam Speaker, his hearing is not as good as it could be. In fact, I said why would you not want to have more people speak in St. Johns, and that's exactly what the minister was referring to when she answered.

Madam Speaker: I will take this point of order under advisement to see what it is that we can ascertain from the record and bring back the findings to the House.

PETITIONS

Transit Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I would kindly ask that everyone in the House relax. It's okay.

I wish to present the following—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Kinew: I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly, Madam Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Bill 36, the budget implementation and—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —statutes amendment act, 2017, section 88(8) repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states, quote: The municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I'm having a lot of difficulty hearing the member read his petition. I would ask for members to please take down the noise so that we can properly hear the petition that is being read.

Mr. Kinew: Luckily, I didn't lose my place; otherwise, I might have to start over. But maybe I'll just back up to the beginning of the quote.

"The municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue." End quote.

(2) Public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

*(14:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017.

This petition is signed by P. Jenkins, J. Gibbing, R. Winter and other Manitobans.

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

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Bill 36, the budget implementation statutes amendment act, 2017, section 88(8), repeals the portion of the municipal taxation funding act which states, quote: The municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of

the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue. End quote.

(2) Public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing its carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017, section 88(8), repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states, quote: The municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue. End quote.

(2) Public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8)

of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Northern Patient Transfer Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitobans recognize that everyone deserves quality, accessible health care.

The people of northern Manitoba face unique challenges when accessing health care, including inclement weather, remote communities and seasonal roads.

The provincial government has already unwisely cancelled northern health investments, including clinics in The Pas and Thompson.

Furthermore, the provincial government has taken a course that will discourage doctors from practising in the North, namely, their decision to cut a grant program designed to bring more doctors to rural Manitoba.

The provincial government has also substantially cut investments in roads and highways, which will make it more difficult for northerners to access health care.

The provincial government's austerity approach is now threatening to cut funding for essential programs such as the Northern Patient Transportation Program, which was designed to help some of the most vulnerable people in the province.

The provincial government has recently announced it would cancel the airfare subsidy for patient escorts who fly to Winnipeg for medical treatment, which will be devastating for patients with mobility issues, dementia, who are elderly and need assistance getting to the city.

The challenges that northerners face will only be overcome if the provincial government respects, improves and adequately funds quality programs that were designed to help northerners, such as the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the absolute necessity of maintaining and improving

the Northern Patient Transportation Program by continuing to respect Northern Patient Transfer agreements and funding these services in accordance with the needs of northern Manitobans.

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Transit Funding

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017, section 88(8) repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states, quote, "The municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue," unquote.

(2) Public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017.

Signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act of 2017, section 88(8) repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states, the municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality that operates a

regular or rapid public transit system a transit operating grant in an amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost of the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue.

Public transit is critical to Manitoba's economy, preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

Eliminating the grant guarantees to municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8) of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act of 2017.

Signed by Roxanna [*phonetic*] Koop, Bryce Singbell, Pearson Montganeck, Matthew Rajfer, Hugh [*phonetic*] Bunguke and many, many others.

* (14:50)

Taxi Industry Regulation

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

The background of the 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 that 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 that 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 Manitobans.

Transit Funding

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment act, 2017, section 88(8) repeals the portion of The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act which states the municipal grants for a fiscal year must include for each municipality the operations a regular or rapid public transit system or a transit operating grant in the amount that is not less than 50 per cent of the annual operating cost to the transit system in excess of its annual operating revenue.

(2) Public transit is crucial to Manitoba's economy, to preserving its infrastructure and to reducing the carbon footprint.

(3) Eliminating the grant guarantees for municipal transit agencies will be detrimental to transit services and be harmful to provincial objectives of connecting Manitobans to employment, improving aging road infrastructure and addressing climate change.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to withdraw its plan to repeal the annual operating grant for municipal transit agencies and remove section 88(8)

of Bill 36, the budget implementation and statutes amendment—statutes amendment act, 2017.

Signed by many, many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I ask that you call Committee of Supply.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Estimates this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Concurrent Sections)

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:10)

Mr. Chairperson (Dennis Smook): Will 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.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just in time. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and you know, I apologize for having to run up to take the question. There's a school group in town for We Day, which was happening at MTS Centre. I know many of us have had the chance to go to We Day. It's a great event, inspires many young people. So just paused to talk to some of the youth who are in the building, here, but I do apologize.

When last we were here, I think we were following up on some details about matters under advisement. I don't know if the Premier is going to table those or not. If not, then we could sort of proceed to some other conversations. There were a few questions on the KPMG report that I wanted to dive into, but I guess I'll just ask the Premier whether he's had the opportunity to table all those items that he had wanted to last time or whether we should go ahead and avail ourselves of the time we have to cover some more ground.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I want to address the questions the member had asked me

before, as I have been doing all the way through Estimates, and he had asked me about staff and I shared the names of all—and positions of all the people in the Executive Council with him. Of course, there's some positions that are—were vacant, I referenced as well, but as of the present time, the technical officer payroll is just a little over half of what it was in the last days of the previous administration, over \$8 million there and about \$4.36 million now.

And I wanted to also—because I undertook to do this, to read into the record the salaries, not the benefits but the salaries of the people I had referenced the other day because the member had asked me to do that. So these are not in the category that I described of the structure earlier, as I outlined the structure for the member, but simply alphabetically, so I will just read those into the record so the member has that information he had asked for.

Ironically, Arlene Arnal is my executive secretary, is the first one, name starting with A and everything, and her salary is \$63,832. And, as I mentioned the other day, this does not include reference to benefits, pension benefits or any other accrued vacation time, any of those aspects. This is strictly on annual salary.

Hannah Anderson, administrative assistant, \$57,400. I'll just round them up or down on the hundreds. Peggy Barta, orders-in-council officer, fifty-six thousand, six—closer to seven hundred. Olivia Billson, press secretary to the Premier, \$74,600. Alison DePauw, administrative assistant, \$63,800. Joey Dearborn, issues management officer, \$62,900. Kristine Derksen, who is my correspondence officer, \$52,300. Cindy Field, office manager, \$62,600. Stacia Franz, creative and digital specialist, \$74,600. Cathleen Goodman, administrative assistant, \$41,400. Philip Houde, chief of staff, \$167,154. Alysia Lawson, outreach co-ordinator, \$63,200. Craig MacDonald, director of regional Cabinet operations, \$84,300. Caitlin MacGregor, press secretary, \$57,400. Amy McGuinness, press secretary, \$74,600. Wesley McLean, government House assistant, \$71,900. Fred Meier, he's—would blush if I read his salary, he's really, really underpaid as the Clerk of the Executive Council, worth far more than he accepts in salary so I'll just leave that unless the member's really curious. Jillian Neirinck, administrative assistant, \$41,400. Jeanine Pitre, executive assistant to chief of staff, \$74,600.

Chisholm Pothier, director of Communications and Stakeholder Relations, \$128,600. Kalen Qually, who just had a birthday, press secretary, \$71,900. Viviane Riding, Cabinet administrative officer, \$57,400. Deveryn Ross, speech and correspondence writer, \$65,600.

Have I run out of time? Oh, I'm okay? Good.

Gurpreet Sehra, administrative assistant to the Clerk of Executive Council, \$47,600. Morgan Shipley, tour co-ordinator and outreach co-ordinator, \$74,600. Elliot Sims, director of Legislative Affairs and Regulatory Accountability, \$119,600. Andrea Slobodian, press secretary, \$74,600.

Just about done. Do you want me to just finish? I can—I'm just about done, so I can get through.

An Honourable Member: I'd ask for leave for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to finish reading his list.

Mr. Pallister: Marsha Street, assistant to the director of regional Cabinet operations, \$51,300. Darcy Thompson [*phonetic*], administrative assistant, Cabinet offices, The Pas, \$51,300. Bruce Verry, director of operations, Premier's secretariat, \$87,900. David von Meyenfeldt, press secretary, \$74,600. Lynn Voth, executive assistant to Clerk of Executive Council, \$68,100. And Colin Weeres, special assistant to Premier, \$76,100.

And that's the complete list and the—as I mentioned, omitting the benefits and other aspects. Just the salaries for everyone—Executive Council staff.

Mr. Kinew: I understand that the Premier appointed a new secretary to Treasury Board, Mr. Paul Beauregard.

Can the Premier share some information regarding Mr. Beauregard's background and experience, as well as when he first met Mr. Beauregard?

Mr. Pallister: I'll—what I'll do—I'm sorry, Mr. Chair.

I'll ask Fred to help me pull up the CV for Mr. Beauregard and then we can get more detail rather than me anecdotally answering the member's question. I'll give him a fuller answer with background, experience and relevant training of Mr. Beauregard.

* (15:20)

I can—I'd undertaken also—the member had asked me the other day about what was the rationale for

using outside legal counsel to give advice, so I'd prepared a response to that. I can just read that on the record; it's pretty short.

Want to go ahead and do that?

An Honourable Member: Sure.

Mr. Pallister: Okay. So this is—the member had a very legitimate question about why would you go—you know, we have legal expertise within the government—why would you go outside? And this was in reference to the constitutional advice we were seeking in respect of the legalities around the federal government-proposed carbon plan, you know, the made-in-Ottawa package. And so I committed to providing member with that information, the rationale as to why we did that. I attempted to answer, but I think this is a better answer than the one I gave.

Why did we use external legal counsel in respect of the abilities of federal government to impose a plan on Manitoba? And, to be clear on this, the issue was one of protecting the integrity of public servants within our government. Had I gone to our Manitoba team—legal team—and asked them for a legal opinion, there's a very real risk I'd be opening them up to criticism as a consequence of whatever advice they would provide to my government, because we have been asking some specific questions about carbon taxes, whether the federal government can impose a carbon tax on Manitoba.

Regardless of the advice they might have given me, I was concerned, and I think my clerk—I can—it's fair to say, was concerned as well that we might open up civil servants to criticisms that they were in some way unduly influenced by my desire for a particular outcome or open to, you know, offering what could be interpreted by some as political advice rather than purely policy advice.

So I would want to make it very clear for the record: this was most certainly not a question of the integrity of any of the people in the civil service at all, and their competence, their capabilities, I think, are—I would hope—certainly, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who worked very closely as the AG for some time with many of these folks, would know of their integrity, I'm sure, would agree with me on the quality of the people that we have in our employ here in Manitoba in this respect, so it was very important that we understand that we hold in high esteem not only those folks that we were attempting to protect

here by obtaining outside advice, but also, in general, the members of our public sector.

So it was very important not to create a perception that could in any way compromise their integrity and put them in an untenable position, so that's—in short, that's why we turned to an outside source.

We did, however, ask our constitutional lawyers, who should we turn to as an external adviser and expert, and it was on their recommendation that we retained Dr. Schwartz, Bryan Schwartz. In addition to pointing to his interest in taking on this project, they advised that Dr. Schwartz was—would be very likely willing and available to prepare a legal opinion on the constitutionality of the proposed federal carbon-pricing backstop legislation.

We agreed with that recommendation because Dr. Schwartz has got an extensive background in constitutional law. He's a teacher; he's a scholar; he's taught constitutional law at U of M for many years. He's authored numerous books and articles. I enjoy his—I forget the name right now, but I know the member for Minto was interviewed as a former House leader by Professor Schwartz for that publication. I think it's called something—

An Honourable Member: Under the Golden Boy.

Mr. Pallister: Under the Golden Boy—very interesting articles in there quite frequently on interest—on topical—topics of great interest to all of us, I think. And he, as a national expert—he's recognized as a national expert. He was available and willing to undertake the project on an urgent basis, indicated he could perform—complete the project in reasonable timelines, which we did want. And, given that there's a pretty limited pool of lawyers with his expertise, that's—there's your rationale as to why we made that decision.

Mr. Kinew: So I think what we heard there was a rationale from the Premier's perspective, but what was listed as the matter under advisement was advice related to retaining outside legal experts, so advice that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) would have received on that. I'll just assume that whatever advice he had was factored in there, but again, if there's other memos or, you know, forms of advice the Premier received, then, of course, be interested in hearing about that.

Just going back to Mr. Beauregard, I'd like to ask the Premier: When did he make the decision to hire Mr. Beauregard in the new role?

Mr. Pallister: First of all, advice was given verbally through the clerk and then on to me, and we'll be able to research the exact date. I don't recall exact date right now, and I wouldn't want to give the member the wrong one.

I'm just—I'm trying to clean up my list of undertakings. The member asked me some questions there, and I've got a short memo on another question he had asked also, which was in respect of David McLaughlin and meetings that he had had. I had read the ones, the Manitoba—some of the Manitoba meetings. I missed a couple. I also didn't have a list, at the time that he had asked the question, about meetings that he had had outside of Manitoba, and so I'll just provide that information I undertook to give to the member as well. This was—beginning with some of the consultations with organizations outside of Manitoba.

Mr. McLaughlin had met with senior staff in-policy advisers as well with ministers of the Government of Canada on numerous occasions. He also had two separate meetings with deputy ministers of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. In addition, he met with representatives from other provincial governments, including Saskatchewan, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Alberta.

In terms of some other meetings that he had held, on September 20th of last year he had a meeting with stakeholders for a carbon-pricing roundtable with 23 participants, which I neglected to read. I'd missed that in my previous list so I'll reference that now. In addition he had: environmental non-governmental organization stakeholders roundtable, which I did not reference, which was held on November 30th of last year with 18 participants; Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce stakeholders meeting held January 11th of this year, 13 participants; multi-bilateral meetings held with over 51—more than 51 key stakeholders—held between August 16 and October 17.

Backing up for a second, I believe we got the date for—the official hiring was August 3rd for Professor Schwartz: August 3rd of 2017.

Numerous presentations delivered to stakeholders at meetings, conferences, workshops, including two full-day sessions with over 40 people from agriculture, forestry, wetlands, grasslands, universities, habitat sectors—in partnership with the International Institute for Sustainable Development—

on carbon offsets and sinks. Presentations to a variety of associations and organizations from industry groups to municipal groups as well. In addition, just last month, September 7th, he had a meeting with outputs—on the topic—output-based carbon-pricing workshops with 21 stakeholders from a variety of sectors of our economy.

He also, internally, created and led an interdepartmental climate change policy working group. Who all was involved with that? *[interjection]* So, involved in that was staff from an array of government departments, because, as we know, these green stuff—green issues permeate about every department of government in some way, shape or form. So he helped co-ordinate and organize that—actually created that group and led it. In addition, he had over 70 separate meetings with officials from eight specific departments, key departments, plus the Executive Council office. Those departments being: Sustainable Development, naturally; Finance; Agriculture; Growth, Enterprise and Trade; Justice; Intergovernmental Affairs; Crown Services, specifically Manitoba Hydro; and, as well, Infrastructure. And I can give the member more detail if he'd like on those meetings. There's no doubt that we got—thus far at least, we've had excellent value for money from the work of Mr. McLaughlin. I'd expect that to continue.

* (15:30)

Mr. Kinew: So, returning to Mr. Beauregard: he previously worked in the telecommunications industry as an executive and also as a lobbyist.

I'm curious to know, did the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or his staff ever meet with Mr. Beauregard during his time working as a lobbyist?

Mr. Pallister: That's a good question. I recall—I do recall having a meeting with him, but I'm—I want to get—because he has to register as a lobbyist, so we'll be able to get the exact details from officials here in due course, and be able to share exactly what those dates and topics were at that point in time. I've got—for undertaking to get his CV, I've got his CV, so I'll just read some of his qualifications into the record—sure.

So, like many CVs, I expect this—I'll be reading, you know, a lot of high praise for the guy into the record, because I expect he would, you know, deserves it. But that's the nature of CVs, the nature of CVs.

So it starts with the shameless self promotion, as they all do, saying that he delivers results, tenacious, creative, collaborative, high functioning in high-stress environments, delivers on commitments, understands importance of execution, comfortable making nuanced decisions with imperfect information; broad-based business executive, seasoned executive in large public company; complex problem solver, ability to parse complex issues involving multiple stakeholders, specializes in analyzing and fixing dynamic political and regulatory matters; change agent, envisions and designs change, makes it happen, outcomes and strategies tailored to audiences, builds bridges before needing them; effective communicator, communicates complex ideas simply, professional media training with extensive experience in internal and external communications; team builder and leader, passionate, authentic, high engagement leader; legal and governance expert, recipient of multiple national and international board governance awards, Top 40 Under 40, Lexpert Rising Star; recognized lawyer, managed three material precedent-setting cases through appeal courts; scope of opportunities, projects versus processes, define success then execute to make it happen with a defined time horizon; driving change, not being a custodian for the status quo—which I think in particular emphasises his applicability and usefulness for the task we've inherited here in Manitoba—span of control and autonomy to have ability and accountability to deliver results; ability to be surrounded by people who are excited about change and making things better. And it goes on to give more of a background in other pursuits.

For a decade, Mr. Beauregard was involved with the Manitoba Telecom Services, formerly MTS Allstream, as chief corporate and strategy officer and corporate secretary. Portfolios and successive promotions have included combinations of strategy, corporate development, legal, regulatory, government relations, corporate secretariat governance, HR, labour relations, corporate communications, community investment and corporate and digital security. And this while working, of course, as the member knows, for a \$4-billion public company with thousands of employees.

It goes on to describe—and if the member's interested I can get into greater detail on some of his highlights there. Prior to that time, for—during five years he was with Bell Canada as the vice-president

of law, mergers and acquisitions; formerly senior counsel and assistant general counsel, so did extensive work with them.

For—during nine years prior to that time he was with Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg, a law firm in Toronto as an equity partner.

And there's an overview, at least, of background.

And, going way back, he was in—he was an exchange teacher in Japan back in the '90s, in '93-'94 specifically. And then, prior to that, at the U of W, which is quite familiar to the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), as—from '90 to '93 as a research and teaching assistant in the areas of—also quite familiar to the member for Fort Rouge—in economics.

Mr. Kinew: So the Premier (Mr. Pallister) mentioned meeting with Mr. Beauregard before his time as Secretary to Treasury Board.

What was the subject of the conversation at the meeting or meetings? What was under discussion at those meetings?

Mr. Pallister: I'll verify for the member. I don't like to guess, but I was—I'm quite sure, given his previous position with MTS, that it would have had something to do with Manitoba Telecom Services or Bell and, as the member knows, they were engaged in discussion, so I'm thinking it was that, but I'll verify it, as I said, for the member.

I missed out some major things here: his educational background, and I should read that into the record.

He's a graduate, in 1988, from Silver Heights Collegiate here in Winnipeg. He then received, in 1996, his BA in honours economics from U of W, a fine institution which, of course, we believe in very much and where my daughter currently attends, and so we think it's a fine university.

In May of '97 he received his JD—and I'm not sure what JD stands for—it was formerly LL.D., though, so it's a law degree from the University of Toronto Faculty of Law.

In 1998—his bar admission course from the Law Society of Upper Canada; in '99 he was called to the Ontario Bar; in 2008 called to the Manitoba Bar, and in 2013 he graduated from the authentic leadership development program, a renowned training program at Harvard Business School.

So that would be his—some of his academic background.

And I think I had undertaken something else—no—provide the member with more information on another topic—no—[*interjection*]-we've got that, yes, thanks, that was it—[*interjection*]-yes; no; good, good, yes, exactly, yes, the additional. And I emphasize again because I see the new member who I have congratulated previously but will do so again, for Point Douglas, and say that this is a total departure from the approach that was taken by the previous administration when I was in the chair which now is occupied by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew).

For three years in Estimates process, I was never able, despite frequent requests, to obtain a single shred of information from the previous premier—not once—and I hope that—and I'm not asking for congratulations from the member, but I know that he's new here and I know that he and the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) may not understand the comparative change that has occurred here at Estimates with our government in respect of the fact that I have been forthcoming on every issue that the members have asked me for information on.

The member for Fort Rouge and, before him, the interim leader, the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) has asked me for numerous pieces of information and I provided them all, and I take some pride in that and I hope we can continue to do that. I think that that's how our relationship can work better to the benefit of the people of the province, and I sincerely hope that that's something the members knew—are willing to acknowledge and, you know, at some future point, perhaps 20, 30 years from now, when the shoe's on the other foot, I would expect that reciprocal behaviour would be the nature of how whatever the name of the party would be at that time that's in government, that they would behave in that manner. It is something, I think, that's important to make the system work more effectively and well.

Certainly, in Ottawa, in my time there on both sides of the House—not simultaneously, I might point out—the ability to obtain information was sometimes constrained by either party in power and I don't think that's helpful.

* (15:40)

So the detail on—I'm running out of time, so I will give the detail on Churchill the member had asked for, given a new time slot, but I did want to put that editorial comment on the record because I think it's important to understand—also for members of the

media who I know appreciate—though they don't frequently say so, naturally, nor should they—the openness with which we deal with information.

Sometimes belatedly, but at least belatedly, we deal with information that they ask for, and we've endeavoured to change that culture from the way it was before. For example, we have—well, I'll get into this in a second in respect of severance payments.

Mr. Kinew: So, the Lobbyists Registry indicates that Paul Beauregard's start date as a lobbyist was January 18, 2017. And there's a note indicating that Mr. Beauregard met with the Premier and some of his senior staff—or, no, a note indicating that meeting was added on January 24th, 2017. So I assume the Premier has undertaken to get back with some details about the meeting, so as part of that, if he could, you know, just sort of lay out the timing for that meeting that was referred to in that note, that would be great.

Also, the Premier's acknowledged, I think, that he was present at at least some of those meetings, conversations. I don't know if there was other ones that happened with staff and Mr. Beauregard—again, would be interested to know.

The intended outcome for the meeting, according to what was filed with the Lobbyists Registry, was to, quote, influence the awarding of a grant, contribution or other financial benefit by or on behalf of the Manitoba government. End quote.

There also seems to be a reference in the registry, the Lobbyists Registry, that the discussion focused on emergency communications in Manitoba. So I'd like to know, what was the benefit in question? What was the subject of the lobbying that was being done with respect to emergency communications?

Mr. Pallister: I think what I'll do is I'll just make sure of my dates and make sure that I'm talking about the meetings that the member's asking about here in context so that I don't confuse things, because I know there have been—I've had a few meetings in the last few months, so I want to make sure I get the actual detail of the specific meeting he's asking about.

I do recall an announcement that we made down in Morris on expanding access to cell reception. I remember another announcement about expanding services in Thompson—[*interjection*]-so I'm—oh, Churchill? Was it Churchill as well? Yes. So, I'll pull this together for the member. I've undertaken to do that and will.

But I should mention—and I think this serves as a way of contrast—we had real difficulty back a while ago—I think it was in—around the time of the rebellion in the previous government's Cabinet—to get information on severance and the handling of severance payments that were made to members. And, as I recall, one of those individuals was Liam Martin, and he was, we found out later, given about \$146,000 to not work—paid to leave.

And the reason I'm referencing this is because he is, I understand, back, and this is the type of thing that troubles, I think, taxpayers, frankly, when we are paying people severance payments—when we're paying people severance payments to leave, to not work and then covering it up. And I was asking questions of the previous premier on this issue and on the others. There was a series—I think there were six other members. I think—if I recall, the total severance payments are in the area of, like, close to three quarters of a million dollars—and couldn't get a shred of detail or a breakdown on that information at all. And I would just want to be sure that this isn't something that continues under the new leader, because this is not a practice that we should be respecting.

We're paying—the previous government was paying people to leave, now they're paying people to come back. This flip-floppy rolling things around to—for people to pay, it's one thing—quite legitimately, the member was asking me questions about paying David McLaughlin for work. Well, we—I've outlined in great detail all the work that David McLaughlin has done, raised the issue of travel expenses and so on. And see, these are legitimate issues to raise, and I respect his right to raise them. But his concerns about \$30,000 have been answered by me in detail, and yet we still haven't got detailed outline of what happened when the NDP paid over \$700,000 to six or seven different people to not work.

So I don't mind defending us paying people for value for money and making sure we're getting value for money, but I sure don't want to see us running into a situation where the NDP is hiring back the same people that were already paid not to work, and paid to leave, so they come back again and cash in again a second time. I just—I think it puts us all into discredit regardless of party, even though it's—it would be an NDP decision, I'm sure, to hire these folks back.

I don't know what's going to happen with Rachel Notley. I don't know how many of the former

NDP staffers are working for her, but there is a good chance that in a couple years, there's going to be some staff come free out there in Alberta. And people we paid to leave from Manitoba—the taxpayers were asked to pay—to not work after the NDP rebellion, and sent out—shipped off to Alberta—are going to be shipped back here and we're going to be paying them again. And I—you know, I just don't think that's fair or right.

You know, it's almost like a departure tax that Manitobans have to pay for. And—you know, a slush fund for socialist staffers to fly off to other parts of the country or other organizations and get paid there, and then—I wonder if Mr. Martin got—did he get severance from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, too? So he's got severance already to not work for the government of Manitoba. Soon after—within the time that severance should have covered for him to be unemployed, he's already employed. And now, did he get severance from Manitoba Teachers' Society as well while he's now getting paid back here? I mean, this is a great way for a guy to make double salaries. But it's not fair, it's not right, and it's taxpayers that are paying that bill.

So I'd like the member to undertake to get back to me, as I have done for him with David McLaughlin—I'd like him to get back to me on the facts around this Mr. Liam Martin and what the exact payment totals are and from where they emanate. Of that \$150,000, what kind of value did Manitobans get for that investment?

I think those are fair questions to ask reciprocally to the member.

Mr. Kinew: To my knowledge, you know, the facts that the Premier laid out match up with the—you know, some of what has been released publicly. So I don't really know anything about private organizations, unions, arrangements.

I would point out to you, Mr. Chair, and also remind the Premier that he himself has taken severance payments. I believe there were over \$100,000 in severance payments when he left provincial and federal governments. So he uses a language of departure tax to, you know, get a nod out of his backbenchers sitting across from him but, again, severance is a part of the arrangements that have been made both for public figures and also for staffers. So I would just remind the Premier again that he's taken severance payments in the past.

I also know that once he started in the office of Leader of the Opposition, I believe that there were some changes made on the Progressive Conservative staffing side and that there were severance payments made there as well. So I mean, it seems to be an issue that comes up with and is dealt with. It's an HR matter, as far as I understand it.

I would like to talk more about Mr. Beauregard and the nature of those meetings that happened prior to him becoming the secretary to the Treasury Board. You know, again, the intended outcome for the meetings that he had as a lobbyist were to influence—and this is a quote: influence the wording of a grant contribution or other financial benefit by or on behalf of the Manitoba government. End quote. So now Mr. Beauregard, I would assume, in his role working with Treasury Board has the ability to have input on spending that is made by the provincial government.

* (15:50)

I'm wondering whether the Premier (Mr. Pallister) discussed with Mr. Beauregard any implications of his previous work as a lobbyist and whether that might cause any issues in his new work with Treasury Board: whether there was any conversations about that, whether there's any conversations about potential conflicts of interest, real or perceived, and what did the Premier talk to Mr. Beauregard about on that front prior to him starting in his role as the Secretary to Treasury Board?

Mr. Pallister: Every senior manager hired in government goes through a vetting process and hiring process led by the Clerk, Executive Council. Everyone is subjected to the same essential screening processes in respect of things like conflict of interest. Those issues were addressed by the clerk in respect of Mr. Beauregard and anyone else who was hired.

But I want to correct the record, because the member is quite wrong on the issues of the severance payments. They were not done by formula; the NDP staffers were not paid on the basis of a formula. And we know those amounts are far in excess of what—for example, what Mr. Martin was paid in severance for the length of time he served, a nurse would have to nurse for over 50 years to get that kind of a severance payment. So these are not the normal course of events, as he's attempting to portray. He may be mistaken in his assumptions, and I'd ask him to just to do some homework in respect of this issue and he'll be, I'm sure, as concerned as I am with respect to the nature of the ad hoc payments that

were made. I would again emphasize that if the payments were honourably made that they would not have been covered up, and they were covered up.

Payments he's referencing made to me are similar in style to the payments made to every departing Member of Parliament and are public. They are made public and that's the reason he's able to cite them. And they're made by formula based on years served, salary and so on—other strict guidelines. But this is not at all the case with the \$700,000-plus that was paid to these departing staffers. They departed as a consequence of a rebellion: their chosen candidate in the NDP leadership race didn't win and, for some reason, despite the fact they were guaranteed they wouldn't lose their jobs, they ended up departing and being paid to depart. And they were not paid according to formula by any evidence, because the formula has never been made public—if the NDP has such a formula, they should, of course, table it—but rather were simply paid.

And this creates the appearance—many appearances—certainly one of mismanagement, which is apparent on the face of it, but also the appearance of wrongdoing, in the sense that it was covered up. So, you know, we're talking about over two-thirds of a million dollars, and now I'm, you know, I'm asking the member to get to the bottom of it, because I don't think any Manitoban wants to see someone who was paid to leave, to do no work whatsoever, then paid to come back, plus be paid again, by another tax-funded agency, that being Manitoba Teachers' Society, so it's my old union I'm talking about. And I would hope that there was no additional severance being paid at the point of his departure there, because I understand that he left there to come here, and so there would have—certainly should have been no severance earned as a consequence of that. But, again, there shouldn't have been payments of this obscene level made to six other staffers either and those were made.

So, you know, I'm concerned about that. And I hope the member is too. And I think it's a chance for him to clear the air, go in the new direction he promised he would take his party when he ran for leader, and I'd hope that he would follow up on it and not try to defend the indefensible in that respect, 'cause it isn't defensible.

We'll get the exact details, as I have undertaken previously for the member, as to the meetings, the times—if I can get locations, I'll give him that too—the people involved. I would say, though, that I do recall

a discussion about FleetNet and I think FleetNet's an issue that was raised. FleetNet, I should just for background remind the member, was the—is the, you know, the emergency contact system that the previous government failed to maintain and manage properly, that was allowed to deteriorate. And it was recommended to the previous administration that they repair this system for a number of years and they failed to do so. This is, of course, this is the mobile radio service that was principally provided by the company that he references now, that Mr. Beauregard worked for. So I do expect that was one of the meetings, was around FleetNet, but I'll verify that.

One thing that I know though, is that the existing FleetNet system that we have was—is essentially obsolete and the previous government knew that for years and did nothing about it. So they handed us a poison pill with this one to the tune of—well, we'll find out exactly. I've heard of estimates as high \$450 million. That's not a small bill to hand to the next administration because you ignored repairs of something as important as an emergency contact system. And I'll get more information on the record on this for the good use of the member opposite when given my next opportunity.

Mr. Kinew: So the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in his answer says that one of the meetings, or perhaps the meeting that he had with Mr. Beauregard when Mr. Beauregard was a lobbyist, was to discuss FleetNet.

The Premier also says that the cost of whatever contract is awarded on replacing FleetNet might also be up to \$450 million. I'm assuming that's just a ballpark figure. But we know that Mr. Beauregard, who was a lobbying the Premier on this file—January of this year—is now not a lobbyist but he's the Secretary to Treasury Board, which, presumably, will be the table at which the new FleetNet contract—whatever replacement for FleetNet there is—is decided at whether or not to move ahead with awarding that contract.

So has Mr. Beauregard recused himself from discussions around FleetNet?

Mr. Pallister: Well, just to share with the member that—on a couple of levels, he should not fear the integrity of Mr. Beauregard. First of all, as you mentioned earlier, he was vetted by the Clerk of the Executive Council. Conflict of interest was discussed in detail. He's filed all the necessary declarations. My

understanding is he holds no shares whatsoever in the company. *[interjection]* Fighting a flu.

But I would also mention that the previous administration awarded a direct award to MTS without competition for FleetNet which they then failed to act on. They did not follow through on it. They did not complete the process. So, in other words, the previous administration, without shopping, awarded what we anticipate will be well in excess of \$400 million of work to MTS.

Now the member is expressing concern about the ethics and acumen of Mr. Beauregard, but I think this displays the lack of understanding of simple business acumen on the part of the previous administration rather well.

So, you know, this system is particularly important for Manitoba's emergency personnel who are put into positions of risk. They—the previous administration was told about the problems with this system years ago—failed to act. I have a copy of communication from MTS to our Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), written just about exactly a year ago saying—and I'll share with the member some of the information, this correspondence. But it says the system faces serious stability issues. Its operational future is in material doubt, aging technology is now obsolete; an inability of the prior provincial government to commit to a new solution despite compelling rationale for doing so. That's what the letter from MTS says.

* (16:00)

It goes on to say—and this is a letter from the former president and CEO Jay Forbes—it goes without saying that communications technology is a fundamental building block of the modern emergency services Manitoba families rely on. Any circumstance in which a police officer, firefighter or EMS responder could not communicate effectively with dispatchers and colleagues could put lives at risk.

He then goes on to provide some background on what is FleetNet. I know the member is aware of it, but I'll repeat; it's a provincial public safety radio network. It's relied on daily by critical public safety agencies such as the RCMP, Manitoba transportation co-ordination centre, municipal fire departments all across Manitoba. It uses 148 radio towers and antennas to provide two-way communication to public safety radio users on foot or in vehicles.

The network has a very large footprint; it covers 98 per cent of Manitoba's roadways. FleetNet users, RCMP, fire, EMS and police workers typically communicate with other users and dispatch centres through a handheld radio device or through an in-vehicle mobile unit.

A core feature of FleetNet allows a radio user to push to talk and be heard by all other radio users in the same group. And it includes other more advanced features such as radio encryption. FleetNet has a central core network that allows radio users on one radio tower to communicate with radio users on other towers across the province. Initially constructed in 1993, FleetNet has been an essential component of modern emergency response services and a cornerstone of public safety in Manitoba.

The Chair knows of a situation, because of lack of reception, where firefighters in his riding were put at real risk as a consequence of the lack of communications ability. And I think we were very fortunate not to have a death in that situation, as I understand it.

So the ability of emergency personnel to communicate with one another is something we should all place as a very high priority.

Now, this system has provided tremendous value to Manitobans. It's been a crucial tool for years for Manitoba's courageous emergency service providers, but the poor and worsening state of the FleetNet network has demanded the attention of our policymakers for many years and unfortunately has not received that attention or support.

Now, that's the view of the provider of FleetNet, conveyed four years to the previous NDP government without action. I'll go on to explain better to the member why I feel that the importance of fixing up this mess that was uncorrected for so long is so critical to the protection of our front-line workers.

Mr. Kinew: So, the Lobbyists Registry has an entry for Mr. Beauregard. The start date is January 18, 2017. The inactivation date is March 17th, 2017. It says that the subject matter of the lobbying was telecommunications. Again, the intended outcome was to influence the awarding of a grant, contribution or other financial benefit by or on behalf of the Manitoba government. And the details for the matter and the intended outcomes were emergency communications in Manitoba, so

that matches up with what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said, that some of the discussion was on FleetNet.

It lists meetings with some ministers in January and also with staffers, but with the Premier himself, on January 24th, 2017. So, the inactivation date there is March 17th. The order-in-council hiring Mr. Beauregard is dated July 12th, 2017, and the appointment is effective September 5th, 2017 and lists the salary range which is in the mid-six—or, well, 143 to 173 thousand, but it's effective September 5th.

Conflict of interest policy for the Civil Service Commission says an employee must not directly or indirectly place themselves in a situation in any official matter where there is a private or personal interest where they cannot be objective in their actions or decisions. So, just—the question is whether somebody could be objective.

So I'm looking at a press release now regarding the replacement process for FleetNet. I believe the Finance Minister made the announcement. There was an RFP put out. The process led to Planetworks being awarded in August, this, and I believe what that means essentially is that Planetworks will subsequently award another contract for the replacement of FleetNet. And so, when Planetworks comes back with this decision, it seems possible that Mr. Beauregard may sit in on that conversation. And so, you know, the Premier has said he believes that Mr. Beauregard holds no shares in the company, I believe, referring to Bell MTS. Whether or not there's a real conflict of interest, perhaps there's a perceived conflict of interest—conflict of interest, again, being defined by the Civil Service Commission as a situation where somebody cannot be objective.

So I would like to know—again, the question I asked previously was whether or not the Premier—or whether or not Mr. Beauregard recused himself, but perhaps I would ask the following instead: Has the Premier asked Mr. Beauregard to recuse himself from discussions on Planetworks or FleetNet?

Mr. Pallister: Yes, Mr. Beauregard's recused himself from any dealings with Planetworks or with any of the dealings around FleetNet.

But I want to emphasize to the member that this line of questioning is one that allows me to reference the lack of ethical conduct in respect of the hiring practices of the previous administration, and I think it's fair to reference this.

There was a rebellion among some of the members of the NDP Cabinet, and I also think a backbencher from Flin Flon might have been labelled as a rebel as well. As a consequence of that, the previous premier was forced to go through a leadership review process. As a consequence of that leadership review process, people were hired precisely during the period of the leadership contest to work in the premier's office. At that time, a lady by the name of Heather Grant-Jury was hired.

If the member would like to dive a little deeper into the ethical misconduct of hiring practices or a lack of value for money, he might need go no further than that type of tactic. There was a new position created at that time. The hiring date coincided with November the 14th—it was precisely on the heels of a staged photo op by various members' discontent for a variety of reasons, I expect. They may like to—they might like some day to speak to that on a book, like Gord Mackintosh did; I don't know.

Nonetheless, the hiring coincided exactly, by the premier's office, with the period of the leadership review. The person was hired within days of the so-called rebellion being launched. Heather Grant-Jury was brought in to work in the premier's office, coincided directly with the leadership contest. Of course, in that contest, the premier would be required to engage in many activities not germane to the premier's normal work, and as a consequence, the eye was off the ball on the part of a lot of portfolios in terms of the budget that ultimately was produced in the spring of '15. It demonstrated a loss of progress against massive deficits. They went completely in the wrong direction. There was no oversight or very little evidence of oversight on the part of the new ministers to their portfolios while the rebellion was taking place.

There were three leadership candidates: a former Health minister for a considerable length of time, later in charge of another portfolio; various ministers. They were, of course, occupied and preoccupied with replacing the premier. The premier himself was occupied with the challenge of not being replaced, and another candidate resigned from his portfolio as well; wasn't directly involved in the rebellion, though may have been the cause of it, at least according to commentary from the member who was here earlier and others; very likely initiated some of the discontent with his constant desire to use his friend to supply orange plastic bags for flood-fighting equipment, despite the fact there's

no evidence they ever worked, without tender and without disclosure.

* (16:10)

So that was the real episode that occurred. And, of course, this was all before the member arrived, but I do educate him on this because it is germane to the questions he raises. He's raising questions of ethics which is fair and quite good, but the practicality of—and defence—the ability to defend the previous administration bringing in staff and seconding staff—Heather Grant-Jury was one; she was paid about \$68,000. She worked from December 14th until April 15th, that coincides almost exactly—in the premier's office—almost exactly with the period of time during which there was a rebellion in the NDP party.

Other people were seconded and brought in—at great expense to the taxpayers, too, I might add—while in fact the government itself was in inner turmoil and not really focused on the job at hand, which was to try to correct the financial mess that was getting worse. It was the service deterioration that was worsening, and a stagnant economic circumstance. All this going on at the same time as things like FleetNet weren't getting fixed, and so as a consequence the poor guys running FleetNet had to go out on eBay to find parts.

Now the member's worried about a person who has already recused themselves from the process of trying to get this thing fixed up—worried about his ethics. He needs to worry about the practical lack of evidence of any kind of management acumen or responsible foresight on the part of the previous administration. Anybody who would ignore the needs of emergency front-line personnel while fighting an internal rebellion at the same time, forcing people to buy parts on eBay to keep security at hand, really has a record that's not very defensible.

So I just—I raise this with the member for background. I know he's probably not aware of these things. This is all new information to him, but it is information he should have at his disposal. And I know he's not trying to assuage the integrity of Mr. Beauregard, but that might be the perception of the questions that he's asking.

Mr. Kinew: I think the Premier (Mr. Pallister) in his comments—the subtext of them is that he acknowledges that it's important to ask the questions so that we can learn in a public setting such as this that there has been a recusal made as a result of the

former lobbying done by this Mr. Beauregard, who's now secretary to Treasury Board. So again, there seems to be a recognition that there may be a perception there about an inability to be objective on some of these subject matters that he was previously lobbying on.

Did Mr. Beauregard recuse himself from all discussions of telecommunications files which will be handled by Treasury Board and the provincial government?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable First Minister.

Mr. Pallister: Yes, I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, I didn't realize I was up.

I think it's important to understand Mr. Beauregard has recused himself from any relationship with a decision-making process or decision related to the two companies which he has had direct contact with, but I do not expect Mr. Beauregard to recuse himself from all issues around technology or around decision making around his field of expertise.

This is in part why we employed the man, to make sure that his skill sets and his experience are able to be used on behalf of the people of Manitoba. So he's voluntarily stepped aside from decisions that he—I would argue is not in a conflict with it because he has no ownership with these former companies, but he's done it on the basis of his concerns about perception. And that's an honourable thing for him to do and I thank him for that, but I think the member was alluding to a broader recusal.

I don't think it's necessary for Mr. Beauregard or anyone else to remove themselves from all fields of discussion in their field of expertise. For example, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) was a lawyer by training, but he should most certainly not remove himself from all decisions around legal issues, or he wouldn't be able to be a legislator at all. The member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) used to farm, but he shouldn't have to recuse himself from all issues affecting agriculture. These are broad-based issue discussions.

Let's see. There's a farmer over there from Dauphin as well. He shouldn't have to recuse himself from issues affecting the Dauphin Ukrainian festival just because he's from Dauphin, you know. I mean, that's a—they're broad bases of interest and so recusal—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chair, you're losing order here. You've got that member back there's—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. If you have—need to have conversations could you please leave the room or keep it so that we can't hear it, because we're trying to have discussions here. Thank you.

Mr. Pallister: I notice that some members have a tendency to engage in extemporaneous conversations at times and one member may, in particular, have that tendency.

I wanted to clarify for the member the critical aspects of this FleetNet issue, because this is really important and I do think that the poorer and the worsening state of that FleetNet network is something that should have been paid attention to years ago. It wasn't.

The MTS developed that technology, that system. They worked with a technology vendor. That vendor was Motorola. The telecommunications field experiences constant change in advances in technology, so vendors are continually evolving. They're improving their products and, over time, this impacts the ability to support any communications network.

So, in the case of FleetNet, Motorola stopped manufacturing core FleetNet components in—get this—2003. In 2003, they stopped manufacturing core components, yet for 10 years more the previous government refused to act in respect of the renewal of the system.

What this—what does this mean? Well, initially low level of risk. Initially, maybe you've got some spare parts around. Not a problem. Things deteriorate over time, whether it's tractors or technology equipment. And so the risk grew and grew, and without a source of new parts, any advanced technology system will ultimately be rendered obsolete, and that's precisely what has occurred with FleetNet to the point where the situation that we inherited was critical.

The risk level became even more serious in 2015 when the vendor ceased to provide contracted support for the system or its components, and that means that since that year there are no assurances that the network can be restored in the event of a breakdown or an outage, including a core system failure. This is a deplorable oversight, dangerous oversight in evidence of the lack of understanding of the need to do maintenance of a very, very important and critical type.

So we now have a system in place that we, as a new government, are forced to address because of the neglect of the previous government over a long period of time. New parts have not been manufactured for this system for now 14 years and restoring a network outage in these circumstances means we have to support—we have to source components from grey market vendors with a time frame that can extend weeks or longer.

As I said, sourcing components from eBay to restore services on FleetNet is hardly a great idea, but it's become a necessity as a result of the neglect. It's inevitable, at some point, that a replacement component just simply will no longer be available from any source, as new components have not been manufactured for more than a decade.

Mr. Kinew: So, a quick question of clarification: The Premier alludes to Mr. Beauregard recusing himself from discussions regarding two companies. Am I right in assuming that those two companies are the former MTS and Bell? So, essentially, Bell MTS and the parent company? Is that right that those are the companies, when discussions of which arise, that Mr. Beauregard recuses himself from?

Mr. Pallister: Okay, Mr. Chair. One of these days I'll figure this out.

So, just to read into the record for clarity, we, as a new government, entered into a tendered agreement—tendered, which just means you shop around a little bit with an independent third party, Planetworks Consulting Corporation, to undertake an expedited public procurement process for a new public safety radio communication service on behalf of Manitoba, something that should have been done years ago and wasn't.

Planetworks is scheduled to complete the procurement process and have an agreement in place with a new service provider by March 31st, 2018.

* (16:20)

Manitoba, with Bell MTS, has taken steps to mitigate the risk of FleetNet service interruptions during the procurement process and subsequent implementation phase. Steps include acquisition of critical spare equipment and service continuity planning with Bell MTS. And as I put on the record, Mr. Beauregard, and the member has referenced him specifically, has no input into those decisions because of the fact of his former employment there—not because he holds shares in those companies, but simply because he wants to make sure that there is

not the perception the member's rightly concerned about in respect of any conflict.

Mr. Kinew: And when 'planetnet' reports back at the end of its process, then there will be a recusal from those discussions by Mr. Beauregard, as well. Is that fair?

Mr. Pallister: Yes, recusal means recusal. I mean, he's walking away from input on those decisions. He won't sit at the table, won't be involved in the discussions.

The—just for additional clarity, with this FleetNet situation, I think it's important not to fail to understand the dire situation that the previous administration allowed our front-line workers to be put into in respect of the lack of potential communications at critical moments. And it is those critical moments that matter most.

I mentioned the need to secure components from grey market areas, eBay—I just also have to mention, there were outages. And, as can be expected, a network of any sort operating in a state such as the previous administration left this one in will experience an increasing number of problems. And that was the case with FleetNet.

So, just as an example, over a 12-month period from June '14 to June '15, there were 331 service incidents, resulting in a total of 160 hours of service disruption. That was between—I repeat—between June '14 and June '15, 331 service incidents. In the first nine months of '16, there've—there had already, at the time of this writing, there had already been 216 incidents and 150 hours of service disruption, almost as many as the year before, in the first nine months of the year following.

So the trend line is—was clear. It's been clear for a while. No action was taken—other priorities; you know, spend a couple of million on some signs that say steady growth, or spend a few million dollars on some advertising that promotes the government's performance, but nothing on FleetNet. Some untendered contracts for some Tiger Dams—who knows if that was a good deal? Probably not, given that the report clearly outlines their failure in most situations as flood protection devices. So you've got, what, potentially another \$12 million spent on that. This money has been spent, it's gone, it's over with. But this, no, this wasn't a priority. Other things were, like employing Heather Grant-Jury in the leader's office during the leadership race. That was a top priority. Fixing FleetNet, that

went way down the list. You know, you get a couple million for a subsidy, a vote tax subsidy for political parties that don't want to go out and raise money except by way of new, innovative techniques like raffles. You've got an opportunity here to understand better that you need to get your priorities straight. And protecting emergency workers should be a top priority. But it clearly wasn't for the previous administration.

Now, I make this point—I know the member wasn't here, nor was the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith)—but the reality is this is the situation. We all need to learn from these mistakes. And nobody's perfect; we all make mistakes. And certainly this was a monster of a mistake by the previous administration.

Now, the people at—front-line workers over at MTS deserve some thanks and credit; Motorola people do, too; the various public safety agencies that worked through this mess and are still working through it. Our emergency personnel, most of all, that have used this Flintstones system with its eBay parts to try to protect Manitobans have persevered to the point that it's amazing that Manitobans haven't got hurt as a consequence of this. And it should not be allowed to continue. The previous provincial administration absolutely refused to act. We are acting to fix it and we're doing it in an ethical and effective manner.

There is also the reality that it's going to take time to fix. Should have been looked at years ago. Like any major communications network, it's going to take time to get it back up and running properly and to perform to maximum capability because you're talking about implementing this over a wide area, all over the province.

So I can tell you that at the time the previous administration was getting these entreaties, including from the Manitoba government employees' union, by the way, who repeatedly tried to message to the government they need to fix this thing up for the good of their members. We are now the only people in North America—Manitoba is the last jurisdiction in North America that's got a public safety network that's using this technology anymore.

So that's a dangerous situation transforming what once was a manageable long-term process into—away from an immediate risk to the people of Manitoba is what we're in the business of doing. It got messed up and now we're trying to clean it up. This is true of so many categories in government.

This is particularly illustrative of the problems we were handed by the previous administration they failed to address in a diligent and prompt manner.

Mr. Kinew: So I guess what's been established by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is that Mr. Beauregard has recused himself from discussions at Treasury Board in his role in government regarding conversations to do with Bell MTS, FleetNet, the Planetworks process that's under way. And perhaps not a real, but a perceived conflict of interest, the perception there that, based on past employment, past income earned by Mr. Beauregard may factor into his decision-making process, or at least appear to factor into his ability to remain objective on such discussions. And so that led to the recusal by Mr. Beauregard and, you know, the Premier says that this is ethical, which is the standard to which we would want all public servants, elected or staff, to adhere to.

The Premier is an owner of an insurance company from which he generates income. Does he recuse himself from discussions at Treasury Board or in government about insurance companies?

Mr. Pallister: I haven't had to do that, but when I was in federal politics I most certainly did. When we were involved with the finance committee in discussions around the insurance act, the member could peruse the records of Hansard in Ottawa and find out I always recused myself from any potential conflicts.

Mr. Kinew: So the BITSA bill for this year contemplates changes to The Insurance Corporations Tax Act. Does the Premier recuse himself from the discussions around that?

Mr. Pallister: Well, I'm not going to cite chapter and verse again. I'll just explain to the member that laws of general application are not necessarily requirements for recusal.

In the case of the insurance act, when it was under study in Ottawa, there was a component to the study of the insurance act that was germane to the entire life insurance industry, of which I was a member, and that was a provision proposed by under the—to widen the Bank Act latitude so that banks could sell life insurance out of their branches. And so, for that reason, because that was germane to my business, as well as it was to tens of thousands across Canada and would have had some impacts certainly on my business as well as those other 9,999 or

whatever number it was, I felt it was wise to just recuse myself on that basis.

But, again, I would explain to the member that laws of general application, as I referenced earlier, a law affecting all farmers doesn't require every farmer recuse themselves from the process of discussing it, debating it or even voting on it, nor does a law itself affecting legal industry necessarily require every lawyer to recuse themselves in the discussion of that law.

For every discussion around every law there is a point at which it profoundly impacts specifically on that person to the degree that it would be necessary to recuse themselves, and I weigh that very, very carefully in terms of my decisions on recusal. But what the member cites does not profoundly impact one way or another on my business or my, you know, the business of which my partner operates in now. And so I would not see any case for recusal, nor have I had one made to me in respect of the issue the member raises.

*(16:30)

So I would say again that ethical issues—again I'd invite the member to consider for a second the ethical aspects of paying people \$700,000 not to work and to leave and then hiring them back and paying them again, and ask himself if that's a profound illustration of one's ethics or not. I'd ask him to consider the ethical aspects of bringing in someone to your office to help you with your leadership campaign, which has absolutely nothing to do with the general good of the people of Manitoba, precisely during the term of the leadership campaign. That to me—those are profound examples of ethical malaise.

I would suggest too, in reference to Heather Grant-Jury, that a new position was created for her specifically during that time and did not exist before. And after she—the leadership race was over and she was let go—or returned back to this previous position she had with her labour union, the position was no longer there and no longer filled. So you've got those types of ethical behaviours that are serious concerns. The member might like to address those and make sure they don't repeat themselves under his leadership.

I'd also say an amazing transgression has been revealed by the Auditor General's report today on managing climate change that the member might like to get to the bottom of. This is an analysis of the

managing climate change approach that was taken by the previous administration and it is a litany of criticisms, I would say exceeding those launched by the Auditor General's office in respect of the East Side Road Authority mismanagement that the member might have liked to own up on, read the Auditor General's report, and have a look at it before launching into too much green credential credit grabbing on the part of his particular political organization.

The fact is that there were gaps according to the Auditor General—and I'm just reading selected clips from the Auditor General's report now. We found—I'll just read the quote here from page 1—we found a lack of progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as in developing a plan for adapting to climate change impacts. We also found gaps in underlying management practices. Despite the efforts of the department and government over the last decade, there's been little change in Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions. Further, at the time of our audit, Manitoba had no emissions reduction target for reducing emissions.

It goes on. I'll go on more on this one because I do think this—that you know, our environment matters. I think our economy matters. I think that we need to have a plan to address both and to return to some kind of sustainable management and to make some improvements. And I'm excited about the launch of our plan later this week in this respect, and I just—disappointed to read the harsh condemnation of the Auditor General in respect of the lack of a plan or success on the part of the previous administration in this regard.

Mr. Kinew: So are there any conversations at, you know, Treasury Board or Cabinet tables that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) recuses himself based on his business holdings?

Mr. Chairperson: The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew).

An Honourable Member: I haven't been put in that position—

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, sorry. First Minister.

Mr. Pallister: Yes, thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: My apologies.

Mr. Pallister: Haven't had to at this point in time and, you know, plead guilty to having started a small business though. And kind of proud of doing that.

That's something I know a lot of the NDP members haven't had the experience of doing, and I wouldn't want the member to create the impression that just because someone has a small business they're automatically in a state of conflict; otherwise, about two thirds of my caucus members would be out of a job. We have an enterprising group on our side of the House who have actually met payroll.

That's something that virtually no one, apart from the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) on the opposition side has ever done. I believe—in conversation with the member for Elmwood—is the only one who's ever met payroll on that side of the House, I believe—for quite a while. I think since the departure perhaps of the member for Gimli. The member for Gimli did have a small DJ business and did employ a part-time worker to help him periodically. So he did in a sense—he did meet payroll and had some business association.

Also I think the member for Swan River, Mr. Kostyshyn, might have at one time brought in a part-time fellow to help him with pulling calves and things like that in the spring. Those two gentlemen, the member for—former members for Gimli and Swan River did have some experience with running a business, but not to my knowledge—the member can clear it up for me—not anybody else I don't think ever had the opportunity to actually write a cheque to somebody else out of the proceeds of their own small business.

So the member's attempt to create the impression that somehow owning a small business puts one automatically in a state of conflict is a rather naïve assertion at best. I would again go back, though, to a very important issue—the issue of managing climate change—and just repeat for the member some of this. Just to pique his interest so he does go and read the Auditor General's report, which I know he'll want to.

Here's another quote. And this is, again, from page 1 of the report, so you won't have to read too deeply into it. It says: the department was aware by the fall of 2009 that its 2008 plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions would not succeed. However, the plan wasn't updated until December of 2015. Again, the government was aware by the fall of nine that its 2008 plan of the year before couldn't work, but it didn't bother to update the plan for seven years. That's amazing. I mean, that—and then the member today for Wolseley claimed success because, well, emissions didn't go up that much. That's like the archer shooting an

arrow against the wall and then running over and putting a bullseye where it hits, you know? You've got to be kidding. No plan, no strategy to achieve success goes on to say despite the department's efforts, there's been little change in Manitoba's greenhouse gas emission levels over the past decade.

The department was aware by the fall of 2009 that the initiatives in the 2008 plan would be insufficient to meet the targets enshrined in the emissions reductions act—its own act. The bill—put out a law there saying it was going to do something, found out it wouldn't work, but didn't change the targets. That's—department didn't update the 2008 plan or the original emissions target until 2015. Just before that last provincial election.

It goes on to say—now this is on page 3 and 4—there was no regular progress reporting on whether the climate change project was on time, on budget or going to achieve its stated goals. Now, man, you can talk green, but if you don't have a plan—you don't have a target—you don't reset the targets when you know they aren't achievable. It's pretty hard to lay claim to any real greenness.

Anyway, there's more. And I'll just get into that in a moment.

Mr. Kinew: So am I right in assuming that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) will have specific emissions reduction targets in his climate plan and carbon pricing plan?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member might be. And I appreciate his interest—and the newfound interest of his party—in planning and actually having targets for climate change efforts. In the next 72 hours or so he'll be able to ascertain in great detail what our plan is.

I would again encourage him, though, to learn from the mistakes of the past—and this is a big one that the previous administration made. According to the Auditor General's report—just released today, hot off the presses—it says there was no—on page 3 and 4—no regular progress reporting on whether the climate change project was on time, on budget and going to achieve its stated goals.

But it gets better. After the plan's 2012 target was missed—according to the Auditor General's report, page 4—after the plan's 2012 target was missed, the interdepartmental progress monitoring was discontinued. Well, I'll tell you, they missed the target, so they decided to take the scorekeepers and

just shut 'em down. Didn't want to know any more. Just discontinued the monitoring. Shut 'er down.

That's like me and my weight loss plan—just throwing the scale somewhere in a closet because I don't want to know. I mean, seriously. You've got a plan, you put a plan out there, you promote it, you raise it with the media, you trumpet it, you've got a press conference after press conference. This is exactly what the previous administration did. And then they found out a year after they put their target up front, they couldn't achieve the goal. And then they just discontinued the monitoring—discontinued the monitoring so they wouldn't be able to tell themselves the truth about their failure to meet their own targets.

* (16:40)

It goes on to say on page 14—this one's interesting, too. The department did not promptly review and update its 2008 climate change plan and related 2012 target once it became apparent that the plan needed updating. So they found out it wasn't going to work, but they didn't update it. That's on page 14.

It says here on page 15: We—this is the Auditor General talking now; this isn't me. This is just me reading the Auditor General's report into the record of this committee for the edification of members and the member—the new leader of the NDP. This is the NDP government, now. This is what the Auditor General says about the NDP government's green activities: We expected the department to set both short-term and long-term targets and that these targets would be supported by economic and scientific analysis. However, this was not the case. No economic or scientific analysis was done.

It says on page 15 specifically, the government conducted no economic or scientific analysis in setting the 2008 and 2015 targets. Well, how did they set them then? Well they set them by looking at the targets that were set in other places. They looked at other places—somewhere else. They didn't look at Manitoba. They didn't have a made-in-Manitoba plan. They actually looked at other places.

So on page 18, it says this—and this is really interesting—it says the 2015 plan noted that over seven megatons of emission reductions would be needed to achieve its stated target of reducing emissions, et cetera. But most of the initiatives proposed were high-level strategies lacking details.

Therefore, it was unclear how they would provide the reductions needed to meet the stated goals.

Department officials actually said, prior to the change in government, that the intention had been to develop the details later. So they put out a plan with no details. I mean, really—you know, there's more. It's just—it's fascinating. On page 15, it says the department conducted no economic or scientific analysis setting its targets, as I mentioned earlier. It says: Department officials told us the 2015 targets—those are the back-of-the napkin ones just before the last election—were arrived at by considering the long-term targets of other jurisdictions.

Okay, so we didn't look at Manitoba. That's clear.

Have I got a little more time? Because there's more interesting stuff here.

Mr. Chairperson: Twenty seconds.

Mr. Pallister: Oh, well. This one's the—this is one of my favourites. On page 14, it says here: More specifically—you're going to like this—the December 2015 plan was to reduce emissions to just under 14 megatons by 2030. This would require more emission reductions than could be obtained by taking every gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicle in Manitoba right off the road. That's what it says right in the Auditor General's report.

Now that is not a realistic plan.

Mr. Kinew: It's always interesting to see the First Minister get wound up. I—you know, I share his respect for the Auditor General, and I think one of the things that—maybe the greatest reason why the Auditor General is important to our public system, to our democracy, is because of the Auditor General's independence—independent officer, they're able to release their findings as they see fit and able to tell truths that governments ought to hear.

But, you know, it seems odd, given the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) reverence for the Auditor General, that he has taken away the Auditor General's oversight over public-private partnerships. You know, as it—you know, currently stands, you know, the Auditor General could review P3s to give an independent, impartial report as to the costs. Under the Premier's new arrangement, it will be a political appointee who decides whether or not a P3 deal is a good deal.

So, you know, without knowing who the political appointee would be, it's difficult to say, but

it seems like they may have less latitude to be independent and tell truths to the government. So that's just an aside for the Chair and other members of the committee to consider.

I wanted to ask some questions about the KPMG report, the non-health KPMG report. I noted that there were few recommendations regarding tax credits that were laid out in that report, and I'm curious to know, like, which of those the Premier is actively considering, actively contemplating. I know some of them have already been pursued; in this past year, some of those recommendations were already put into place, particularly with respect to post-secondary students.

There were recommendations about tax credits benefiting children on the fitness side, on the arts side. I was wondering if the Premier is considering implementing recommendations of the KPMG report there.

Mr. Pallister: I want to be clear for the member that my reverence for independent officers is perhaps exceeded by my desire to see a legitimate climate change strategy brought into our province that works, that works for our environment, works for our economy. So this is why I find it so disquieting that I read this Auditor General's report, which says not only did the previous administration fail to set relevant targets, not use Manitoba's specific data, science or analysis to determine those targets. Not only did they discontinue the evaluative models, but they also shut down the scorekeeping and monitoring so they wouldn't know how they were doing. After being told their plan would fail, they failed for eight years to update it. This is unbelievable. This is incredible. This is not the action of anyone who cares seriously, takes climate change seriously. This is the action of a government that does not take it seriously; in fact, quite the opposite, that thinks it's just a perceptual issue.

The member's confined his questions today largely to perceptual issues but not to real ones. And the reality here is that we need a climate change plan that's made in Manitoba for Manitoba, and that's what we are going to be announcing later this week. But, again, there—the Auditor General's saying they recommended in 2010—there's a previous report from the Auditor General to the government in 2010, which recommended the department update its 2008 plan because it had already been told it couldn't work. However, the department didn't do that until just before the last—the '16 election, in

December of 2015. And when it updated it, it didn't update it using Manitoba data. Rather, it came up with a plan which essentially, pie in the sky, says it's going to reduce emissions by just under 14 megatons by 2030 and to about 10 megatons in 2050.

Now, Manitoba's reported admissions—emissions in 2015, just for the interest of committee members, were 21 megatons. I repeat, there were—the NDP government of the day said they were going to reduce, in the next 14 years, they were going to reduce our emissions from 21 megatons to under 14. Again, this would mean, according to the Auditor General, this would require more emissions reductions than could be obtained by taking every single gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicle in Manitoba off the road. This is fantasyland. This is the kind of stuff that creates disquiet among those who care about greening our country and doing our part in respect of climate change and facing the challenges head-on and factually and really not just inventing a target which had no intentions of hitting, but rather, actually having a plan and acting on it. This report should be required reading for anyone who wants to understand truly the lack of sincerity around the issues of addressing climate change that was put on display by the inaction of the previous government.

* (16:50)

Now, the Auditor General has said better practices are needed in setting targets. They have said the government should—and this was referenced in two different Auditor General's reports besides this one—should set both short-term and long-term targets, and that these targets should be supported by economic and scientific analysis. However, in the Auditor General's old—own words, this was not the case. The government conducted no economic analysis. The government conducted no scientific analysis. It set its targets in both 2008 and the 'updated'—updated 2015 target I spoke of, the pie-in-the-sky, take-every-vehicle-off-the-road target. It set them both without any economic analysis as to the consequences.

We want to have and must have a plan that works for Manitoba's environment, but it must also work for Manitoba's economy. We have to have a plan that helps us in both areas. Both must work together to sustain our province's social programs and our social fabric.

This is a harsh condemnation by the Auditor General, yet again, of the lack of sincerity and the

lack of commitment to this very important task by the previous administration. I would hope that the new leader of the NDP will undertake today to change the record of his party in respect of this issue.

Mr. Kinew: A new direction on combatting global warming is one of the issues that I spoke about in the leadership campaign and is one that resonated with Manitobans across the province.

I spoke about it with many people and I'll definitely be moving our party in that direction. We'll also be calling the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to account if his plan doesn't do enough to combat climate change and global warming.

And so based on the First Minister's comments today I will expect to see concrete greenhouse gas emission targets on Friday and we'll evaluate what those targets mean and how we might reach such targets to help combat global warming.

Another aside for you to consider there, Mr. Chair. I hope you enjoy these little sidebars.

The question was about the KPMG report, the non-health KPMG report. In this KPMG report that the First Minister commissioned there's a recommendation to phase out the children and young adults' fitness and children's art and cultural tax credits.

So, I'll just ask directly the First Minister: Will he phase out those tax credits?

Mr. Pallister: We'll give good consideration to all the thoughtful recommendations the KPMG report contains because they have done a cross-jurisdictional analysis, extensive work, the kind of research and analysis that was never done by the previous government, according to the Auditor General, in respect of setting its targets.

The member says he is going to be looking for targets from us. He has to look deeper than that. He needs to look for results because anybody—*[interjection]*—that's good; it's a nice banner but it referenced targets. Targets are less important than achieving results. Governments around the world have set targets for years and they have failed—most of them have failed miserably to achieve any of them.

The previous government set targets, too. One of them was a target that would have required us to take every diesel-powered and gas-powered vehicle off the road to achieve it, so basing your evaluation of our government's performance on the statement of

targets would be something I'd encourage the member not to do exclusively. I would encourage him to consider results as a more important criteria for assessment.

In respect of P3s—the member references P3s. We are the only province that has actually got a law on the books which the previous government put in place ideologically to prohibit P3s. To all intents and purposes we've moved from having the opportunity to progress and get better value for money by working with the private sector as partners, moved away from that under the previous administration, to impose constraints and restrictions on the private sector so that we would limit the involvement of them in any P3 pursuit.

To all intents and purposes, the previous administration boycotted the use—prohibited the use—legislated against the use—of what are, in fact, being used in every other province in the country right now—160 different P3 projects in nine of the 10 provinces, and Manitoba's got a law that essentially prohibits the use of P3s in our province at a time when we have an infrastructure deficit we need to address, at a time when we need to get more done, when we need to have lower maintenance expense over the lifecycle of facilities, which is one of the byproducts of 3Ps, according to those who have used them with some success.

They are not perfect, but we are not ideologically opposed to using vehicles and tools to get better infrastructure in place and to stretch the dollar value of our purchases in this category.

The previous administration let their ideology blind them to the possibilities that even other NDP governments across the country saw benefits from.

So this is an ideological problem. The member has inherited it. I hope he doesn't appropriate the John Loxley position that every involvement by the private sector in anything public is a mistake, but that has certainly been the position that his predecessor took. That's a misguided position.

Just for example, I mean, there—Ontario, of course a much larger province, has 136 P3 projects on the books; BC, 43; Alberta, 19; Quebec, 18; New Brunswick has 13; Manitoba has six in total. And anyone who knows those projects knows they're working well—the Chief Peguis project, the Bill Clement bridge and others are—they're projects that were completed ahead of schedule, below budget, and they are fine pieces of road for the people of

Winnipeg to enjoy and use, and for visitors and travellers and those involved in commerce to use as well.

There are—there's an advantage, I suppose, if one can try to paint a shiny surface on the inactive approach the previous government took. We now have the opportunity to learn from 150 different other P3 projects around the country. Some of them have had challenges, for sure. And to learn from those experiences, and to learn successfully to adapt and to find better ways of doing things, is what we're after.

As far as oversight is concerned, the only province that has put these kinds of burdens in front of people in getting this thing done—we'll make sure the transparency is maintained, make sure the possibility though, of finding better investments and savings through design innovations, better partnerships, better performance-based penalties put in place to make sure that our private partners are doing the things they are supposed to be doing in these agreements—these are all critical.

We need more investment infrastructure, not less. And I continue to believe that we have to be open-minded and not close-minded by old ideologies to the benefits of looking at 3Ps as an opportunity. As I said, other jurisdictions, regardless of political stripe, across the country—not so encumbered, or not so controlled by the Manitoba Federation of Labour, have decided that they wouldn't make—take advantage of and have done so.

So we need to do the same.

Mr. Kinew: Except that it was the Auditor General who would have been reviewing P3 projects under the previous government's approach. So it's not that P3s were not pursuable; it's just that there is a requirement to have the Auditor General review them.

But again, the question was about child, fitness, and cultural tax credits and whether they'd be phased out. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) says they'll give due consideration to phasing out the tax credit for kids who play sports and for kids who are taking out-art classes and other cultural activities after school, says they'll give due consideration to all the recommendations in the KPMG report.

One of the other areas identified in the KPMG report is on the Education Property Tax Credit. And there's recommendations in there about reducing the scope or reducing the amount for tax credits.

And so, you know, based on the Premier's comment that he'd give due consideration, it seems that perhaps he's considering reducing the amount of the Education Property Tax Credit. Perhaps he's considering changing the amount, who it applies to.

I think these are interesting questions around affordability, interesting questions given the media report—I believe it was yesterday—that highlighted Winnipeg's mill rate on property taxes and this Education Property Tax Credit, being a tool of the provincial government to help with the affordability issue for people, you know, who pay property taxes.

So I am interested to know if the Premier does have plans to review the Education Property Tax Credit, whether it's the amount of people who qualify, whether it would be the amount at which the tax credit is given. I'd like to hear the Premier's comment.

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

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*(15:00)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Sustainable Development.

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

The floor is now open for questions. Mr. Altemeyer?

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I think when we left off—

Madam Chairperson: My apologies. The honourable member for Wolseley.

Mr. Altemeyer: I answer to both.

I think when we left off yesterday, I had asked a question of the minister. I don't know if she had an answer ready or—so if she wants to start with that, then we can go from there.

Madam Chairperson: Would the honourable member for Wolseley like to restate his question?

Mr. Altemeyer: If needed, sure. I think the—yes, sure.

It was a question about the environmental approvals budget line.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Indeed, I can confirm that two FTEs were reduced and we had found efficiencies within the system by changing the organizational structure.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thanks for that.

What were the—I mean, two FTEs. By my analysis, here, that we've—it looks like environmental approvals was cut by roughly \$350,000. Is that the minister and department's understanding?

Ms. Squires: I'd like to confirm for the member that, on page 81, the environmental approvals subappropriation page, the difference is actually \$163,000, which is the amount of the two—equivalent to the two FTEs.

Mr. Altemeyer: And could the minister please tell us what those FTEs were doing that no longer exist?

Ms. Squires: So the two FTEs, that I would also like to point out, have been vacant since members opposite time in office. One of them was the environmental remediation supervisor, vacant since 11/16/2015, and a petroleum storage program co-ordinator, which was vacant since 11/02/15.

The environmental—or, the petroleum storage co-ordinator position, after review of Manitoba's current regulatory regime for the storage tanks, was undertaken as part of our ongoing commitment to reduce red tape and leaning our processes. A comprehensive scan of cross-jurisdictional storage regulations was completed as part of this review, and the proposed changes are primarily administrative in nature and resulted in the reduction in staff resources' requirements from two to one FTE.

And, on the environmental remediation supervisor, that position—or due to the nature of the work and the length of the time that the position had been vacant without impact to current staff resources or environmental protection, a decision was made to eliminate it.

* (15:10)

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, the climate change and air quality section has some different numbers from last year's Estimates to the revisions to this year's budget. Again, by our trying to figure out these different documents, we see an approximate cut of around \$20,000.

Is that accurate so far as the minister and department are concerned, and, if so, what did those cuts come from?

Ms. Squires: I can confirm for the member that in the Climate Change and Air Quality department there was—there is the same number of FTEs, but there was a reduction in \$18,000 and that is the result of a staff change. Whenever senior staff either retires or leaves for another job and a more junior staff is hired, typically that more junior staff comes in at a lower cost. That is in keeping with regular HR management practices in government and presumably in any private sector operation that intends to stay in business. So that is really the result in the \$18,000 reduction there.

But, on the issue of climate change, I can also share with the member that we do take climate change very seriously, and we are looking forward to addressing this real and growing concern. And today we did receive a scathing report from the Auditor General who looked at a time period when previous members opposite was in power and they failed to achieve any meaningful reductions in carbon emissions. And now I also want to take this opportunity to thank our hard-working department for their commitment and their dedication to helping our government achieve meaningful results for Manitobans and look to not only protecting our environment but also protecting our economy.

* (15:20)

And I would like to say that in the Auditor General's comments in the first page, I'd like to report into the record that he says that the potential impacts of climate change pose a threat to infrastructure, human health and well-being, the economy and our natural environment. And, given the significance of these threats, the Auditor General had examined whether the Department of Sustainable Development was adequately leading the Province's response to climate change.

Now, the Auditor General goes on to write that he'd found several gaps in the planning, monitoring and reporting processes for initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and at adapting at climate change impacts.

The department was, under the previous administration, was fully aware by the fall of 2009 that the greenhouse gas emissions reduction target in its 2008 plan would not be met. However, the plan was not updated until December of 2015.

Following the April 2016 provincial election, our government announced it was developing a new plan. As required by legislation, the department reported on greenhouse gas—publicly reported on greenhouse gas emission reductions achieved for 2010 and 2012 and the plans to report by the end of 2017 on results achieved to the end of 2016.

The department has been working since 2011. The Auditor General writes to identify and assess the risks associated with climate change impacts in Manitoba. This work needs to be completed so the province can prioritize identified risks and develop a provincial adaptation plan. And I can assure members opposite that that is something that our government and our Department of Sustainable Development takes very seriously.

The Auditor General goes on to say that he's pleased that our department has acknowledged the value of eight recommendations to strengthen Manitoba's process for responding to climate change, and that the first of these recommendations will be at September 30th, 2019.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, the government removed the water-use licensing section as a separate line in their Estimates from previous years to this year's. We're wondering where did that line item go. Has it been absorbed into something else or is it in a different department? Or where is it, and how much of a difference from previous year to this year is there, if any?

Ms. Squires: As for the water use licensing, we moved it into a new branch with drainage licensing so that all the water rights licensing would be in one area. And this is certainly in keeping with our holistic approach to watershed planning. We believe that watershed planning is going to achieve results for our environment.

And I'd like to segue back to the Auditor General's report and further what he said about the previous administration's climate change plan. He wrote that—he noted that past plans were not supported by a comprehensive analysis of different approaches and they lacked implementation details, expected emission reductions and estimated costs. We also noted that progress monitoring was weak. Without targets, adequate plans and suitable monitoring processes, the likelihood of success in reducing emissions is greatly reduced.

The Auditor General went on to say that, despite the department's efforts and government's 2008 plan

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 6 per cent below the 1990 level by 2012, which was the target set in the previous administration's Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act, there has been little change in Manitoba's greenhouse gas emission levels over the past decade. The department publicly reported on the climate change results achieved by the end of 2010 and 2012, but it doesn't report on progress on a regular annual basis, or disclose the cost of the government's change—climate change initiatives.

Further details include gaps in management processes for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The department was aware by the fall of 2009 that the initiatives in its 2008 plan would be insufficient to meet the 2012 target enshrined in The Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act. As explained in department documents, some initial estimates of emission reductions were too high, some expected federal actions did not occur and some program participation rates were lower than originally anticipated. However, the department didn't update the 2008 plan or the original emissions target until December of 2015.

Now, the December 2015 plan had only high-level strategies. It lacked accompanying details as well as estimates of expected emission reductions and costs. And, most importantly, it was short-lived. And from there, our new government was left to pick up the pieces, fix the finances, repair the services, rebuild the economy and protect the environment.

*(15:30)

Mr. Altemeyer: Forestry and Peatlands Management looks like it was reduced by over half a million dollars. Wondering what number the minister and department comes up with and what any of those cuts might be related to.

Ms. Squires: So, thank the member opposite for the question.

Now, the reductions to the budgets in Forestry and Peatlands branch, those budgets were reduced based on a review and reorganization of the branch. Positions that were vacant and no longer needed were eliminated as more efficient ways of working have been developed by our dedicated staff.

I can tell the member that the total number of positions eliminated to achieve this improved efficiency is six regular full-time equivalents, and I'd like to point out that all six of those positions were

vacant and had been vacant since the time when member opposite was in government. That includes six forestry and peatlands operators, a base mapping, GSI operator vacant since 2015, a pathology technician vacant since 2015, a pesticide application technician vacant since 2015, and a growth-in-yield technician, also vacant since 2015. That resulted in annual savings of \$356,000, and two departmental work crew positions were also reduced for an annual savings of \$109,000.

Additional savings in the department were also found by reducing annual operating costs of \$23,000 that were previously associated with telecommunications requirements of these positions. Now, we know that we can reduce the number of dollars associated with telephone costs. Sometimes we switch from two phones down to one to save some money if we have employees that have both a cellphone and a land line; perhaps they self-identified as someone who could live with just one phone. We also know that if we switch to a better plan, we can achieve some efficiencies. I always look for efficiencies in my government plan and my telephone. I always make sure I put on roaming when I'm travelling. And, if I'm leaving the country, I also ensure that I have appropriate travel plans or—so I don't incur excessive roaming charges.

And so we ask our employees to also look for efficiencies in these matters and not to incur excessive roaming charges and other associated costs with their telecommunications. So we were actually able to achieve savings of \$23,000, and I think that that is a great example not just for in our department but government-wide. I think that all members who have a government-issued telephone could look to the department and find ways to save money and use them as a leader and as a good example. Thank you.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, sticking with this—and I acknowledge I had indicated that today we'd be doing water and then climate change, and that is my intention. I just had sort of broad stroke financial questions. We're almost done those, so I appreciate staff's patience here.

But, just before we leave this for the day and head into some of those more policy-specific areas, notice that in the annual report, that lower grants to fight Dutch elm disease were part of an over \$1-million underexpenditure in that same Forestry and Peatlands line item. Can the minister please tell me what—how much the grants for fighting Dutch

elm disease were reduced by and the rationale for that?

* (15:40)

Ms. Squires: I can confirm for the member that our budget did not change in regards to the Dutch elm disease program but our actual expenditures this year was lower than last year and I will ask my department for clarification on the amount of that actual expenditure and report back to the member.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, I certainly appreciate that. I'll look forward to getting the information when available. Just one supplemental piece to that, it may help in the search for the answer. My understanding is that previously roughly \$1 million came from the provincial government on an annual basis, specifically to the City of Winnipeg for Dutch elm disease fighting efforts. If, in their response, they could indicate how much was changed both there specifically for the City of Winnipeg and then any changes to other communities that were getting support or that the Province was involved in. Thank you.

Ms. Squires: I can tell the member that the grant to the City of Winnipeg does not come from this department. We believe it comes from Municipal Relations. We do fund 38 communities outside of Winnipeg but we do not fund the City of Winnipeg directly from this department, and if members like, we could either call for a recess and have Municipal Relations come in and answer that question or I could get that information and provide it tomorrow.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, I mean, I've loved recesses since I was in grade school but I think we can carry on, but thank you for—thank you, Minister, for the offer. [*interjection*] Recess. Somebody grab the—all right.

So, no, that would be fine if the minister and staff can just provide the break down from the different departments when it's available. That would be—that'd be great.

I do have some more sort of financial questions but, you know, those get boring after a while, so let's—we can shift to some of the topic areas I had mentioned yesterday. Maybe let's go to some water subjects.

And I'll begin, again, with a collaborative note. I freely confess I was relieved to hear the government was going to file a legal appeal to the NAWS decision in North Dakota in the US district court.

That was the right decision. We had, of course, publicly called on the government to do that. I don't see the point of playing partisan games when the government does what you ask them to do. So that is a good step forward.

We have asked to see a copy of the appeal that the government has filed or to gain an understanding of what avenues the government is taking in its attack on the court's decision. Is any of that information available at this time?

Ms. Squires: Our government's concern has always been and always will be that the transfer of biota between the basins could threaten the health of Manitoba's freshwater resources, including Lake Winnipeg. And since the 1990s, the Manitoba government, whether it's been our government or a previous administration, we have been in unison in the fact that we both actively oppose efforts to transfer Missouri River water into the Hudson Bay basin through projects like the Northwest Area Water Supply project in North Dakota, and—including through court action against the project.

Our recent appeal that we filed, we—to the US district court, we have until November 30th to reveal our reasons to the US district court and the Bureau of Reclamation the reasons for that appeal. And we do not believe that it is a prudent or wise measure for us to preliminarily get into the reasons for the appeal—for appealing the decision before we notify the US district court and the bureau.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you for that answer.

Would the minister be willing to make the appeal public when it is filed, whether it's right at the—I think November 30th date, or if you file it earlier than that, would she be willing to provide that?

*(15:50)

Ms. Squires: When we do, it becomes a public document, so I would be more than happy to—it'll be public and—provide you a copy.

Mr. Altemeyer: Further to the NAWS topic, could the minister sketch out some of the negative impacts that could be anticipated in Manitoba if North Dakota were to proceed unilaterally or perhaps when the court case—just what kind of scale of problems are we potentially looking at here in Manitoba?

Ms. Squires: I thank the member for that question, and as he knows, Manitoba and Canada has opposed the inter-basin water transfer from the Missouri River basin to the Hudson Bay Basin because of the risks these projects would pose to introducing harmful and invasive species of biota into Manitoba's waters.

At the same time, Manitoba's also argued that, should an inter-basin transfer proceed, it is essential that the Missouri River water be effectively treated before it enters the Hudson Bay basin to remove and deactivate harmful biota. And we are pleased that some of those actions will be maintained and that we are being assured of a high level of protection for the Hudson Bay, that our actions have resulted in a high level of protection for the Hudson Bay basin from the threat of invasive biota mainly through the additional treatment prior to the transfer of water from the Missouri River basin into the Hudson Bay basin.

But primarily our focus has always been about keeping that biota out, and we know that the types of pathogens that could be spread between basins with an interbasin water transfer if it's not—if the water is not adequately treated is—one example is the parasitic protozoa, commonly known as whirling disease, and whirling disease is having a devastating effect on cold-water fisheries, such as salmon, trout and similar species in North America. And this disease usually causes neurological damage to young fish causing the affected fish to whirl in a corkscrew pattern and it makes feeding difficult, makes it easy for predators to eat the fish, and thus their survival rates are greatly reduced.

Some estimates show that the damage to the fishing industry is in the hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenue. And whirling disease is not currently found in Manitoba, but has been found in the Missouri River basin, and that is a real concern for our government.

And the other example of a pathogen that we have our eye on is the viral hemorrhagic septicemia which is caused by a virus of the same name. That virus has caused massive die-off in the Great Lakes to date. And that viral hemorrhagic septicemia is not currently present in wild fish in the Missouri River Basin or the Hudson Bay basin.

But if it's introduced, it could have devastating impacts, including to Manitoba's walleye fishery.

And this viral hemorrhagic septicemia causes fish to experience hemorrhaging of their internal organs, skin and muscle, and some fish show external symptoms, but others show signs of infection that include the bulging eyes, bloated abdomens and bruised-looking reddish tints to the eyes, skin, gills and fins.

So Manitoba—our government remains diligent in protecting our water and protecting it from the interbasin transfers, and we are doing what we can to ensure that these invasive species and biota are not introduced to our waterways.

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

Can she provide some more details given the enormous, you know, environmental, economic and then social impacts that just those two potential invasive species could have on our citizens and our little part of the world here?

Could she share with us the commitments that her government has received from either North Dakota or the proponents of the NAWs indicating what level of treatment will be provided should this project go ahead?

* (16:00)

Ms. Squires: I thank members opposite for the question and we know that the outcome of this decision could potentially set a precedence for other projects and how they are assessed in terms of risk management, and so we do recognize the importance of this.

We know that the record of decision in 2015 had a preferred alternate—alternative which would commit to a treatment on the Missouri side before it passes into the Hudson Bay, and that does include a high level of treatment. And we would view that treatment and that assurance that that treatment could occur on the other side of the divide would—we would view that as progress if we were to achieve that certainty of the high level of treatment.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, and further to that, if North Dakota ends up proceeding with that, any treatment plant is going to have to be perfectly designed, perfectly built and never fail. When we're talking about protozoans, as the minister correctly described in her previous answer, of course, they're microscopic. If any treatment plant that's built fails

even a little bit and water containing those foreign species ends up in our water basin, all of the negative impacts that she's referring to could—well, they'll be set in motion. Who knows how quickly they'll take hold, but the risk will just permanently be there.

Is the government contemplating asking North Dakota for a performance bond of some sort as a condition of anything like this ending up potentially risking Manitoba's waters? I mean, for the government to just, you know—appealing the court decision's the right thing to do, but we don't know where that's going to go. And I would hope that the government would use every measure possible to argue the case that, one, this shouldn't happen, that there are alternative options available that don't involve an interbasin transfer for North Dakota, and that if they do proceed, they better be prepared to compensate Manitoba if something goes wrong.

If nothing else, that will, for sure, make North Dakota set up a notice and do everything possible to ensure that their treatment facilities work properly and are designed properly and are built properly and are not subject to cost-cutting measures or skimping on protection. So I would float that idea for the minister's consideration as they consider working on this very critical file.

* (16:10)

Ms. Squires: Thanks, and I hope that members opposite can appreciate the situation that our government is in and that we are in the middle of a legal challenge, and if we start talking about future hypothetical punitive actions that we may or may not take—would certainly—potentially cause some consequences for that legal challenge that we are currently involved in.

We are hopeful for a good outcome. We are negotiating, and we've already been on the record to say that we do want to have a seat at the table. We want to be on that adaptive management committee so that we can ensure that Manitoba's waterways are protected and that we can always continuously ensure that the environment is considered heavily before any decisions are made.

But, in terms of going into hypotheticals about what our government could or could not do, or may or may not be able to do, I do fear that we could just jeopardize our case right now. And we are really hoping for a productive negotiation.

Mr. Altemeyer: That would be the ideal and I'm sure if it was just Manitobans deciding, it would be

very reasonable dialogue going on. North Dakota, of course, has its interests and its agenda, and we'll see where that plays out.

Further to the NAWS question, with the injunction that our government had successfully fought for and then defended, and which has now been—at least temporarily—removed by this most recent court decision, my understanding is the NAWS proponents have the green light to continue construction. There's a lot of pieces of this project that are in place already.

Can the minister or her staff give us a timeline of when the NAWS would be completed, or is there some reason why they are not proceeding with construction at this time?

Ms. Squires: So to clarify, even with the injunction, the—there were parts of the project that were able to proceed with construction prior to the lifting of the injunction, but then when the injunction was lifted in August, that did remove any obstacles for the construction. And we have—it's been reported publicly, I believe, that the—they're still in the design stages of this filtration system and the entire project.

Ultimately, two to three years they could conceivably complete their project. Again, that is a hypothetical. I don't have any say in that and our government wouldn't have any influence on the, you know, how quickly or how slowly they build this. But we do know that the injunction, it being lifted, removed the obstacles for continuing the work on the project.

Mr. Altemeyer: That's good to know, and yes, that mitches—matches my understanding as well. Reason I'm asking about the timelines is, of course, we don't exactly have control over how quickly the US courts will hear an appeal. And, granted, there's a deadline coming up, November 30th, but it would be tragic if there was something that could have been done a little quicker on our end to remove any possibility that the project would be completed before the court decision had a chance to render its views on the matter.

So I would just flag that for the minister and the department. If it is still a two to three year timeline, then hopefully that would be enough. But, if at all possible, they can, you know, file a good document, a good argument—you don't want to compromise the quality of the work, of course, but to do that as a priority-action item so that the court process south of

the border is not delayed in any way—I think that would be a very positive step.

Yes, I don't really have a question in that, but just more sort of putting that idea on the record.

On a related note, what's the minister's position in response to the Red River Valley Water Supply Project?

* (16:20)

Ms. Squires: In regards to the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, it's moving more water—or it would move more water—pardon me—so a bigger project, a bigger concern. Ultimately, there would be more risk for biota to be transferred into our water supply or water system, and so, again, we are watching it. We know that there's—right now there are just some talks; there's nothing that's concrete action that has occurred that would signify that they are moving forward with the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. But, there again, what happens with the Northwest Area Water Supply Project will set a precedent, possibly, for this. And the concern is real and we are going to follow the progress on this report and be ready to act, if necessary.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you for that.

On a different but related water topic, what is the government's intentions or the status of upgrading the City of Winnipeg's North End Sewage Treatment Plant?

Ms. Squires: As members opposite will probably recognize, we do have a significant challenge with waste water.

* (16:30)

Currently, we know that over 5 billion litres of raw sewage flows into the Red River from the city of Winnipeg. And we are looking to move towards upgrades for the combined sewer overflows. We are going to be also working in conjunction with the City of Winnipeg on the North End Water Pollution Control Centre.

Now, members opposite would be aware that it was under their previous government that extensions were provided to the project. They understand that it is a very complex and expensive project, and what we're doing, the approach that we're taking, is to work in conjunction with the City of Winnipeg so that we can find meaningful reductions in nutrients that make sense to Manitobans as well as looking at our task of how we're going to prevent the continued

flow of over 5 billion litres of raw sewage into the Red River on an annual basis.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I'd like to first of all congratulate you on your ministerial position and look forward to working with you in your new capacity.

What I'd like to ask you about is, what progress has been made in terms of eco-certification, and I'm particularly concerned about Lake Winnipegosis, to start with, because it's—the pickerel fishery there has been depressed for years and years. And I noticed in the latest annual report that the walleye production is still considerably lower than where it should be. We don't know, really, precisely where it should be, but it needs to be much better than it is right now.

Ms. Squires: I thank the member for the question, and I also thank him for his passion and commitment to sustainable fishing practices in Manitoba. And we do know, of course, that the pickerel fishing—fisheries are depressed. We know, according to the 2011 technical review report that I tabled earlier this week—and I'm sure members opposite probably read through that—and so—and it would be no surprise that we are dealing with a potential collapse of walleye on Lake Winnipeg if we don't change our fishing practices. And our government is very committed to finding sustainable fishing practices and moving towards eco-certification. Members opposite would know that, in order to do that, we need collaboration. And to do that in consultation with fishers and not only—you know, we're looking at engaging with anglers as well as commercial fishers and rights-based fishers.

We have to do consultation and extensive consultation on that so that we can have—in order for this to be a successful transition towards sustainable fishing practices on not just Lake Winnipegosis, but Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg and, quite frankly, all the other lakes in Manitoba. We need to have significant buy in from all the fishers and, in particular, our rights-based, indigenous fishers.

I do feel quite optimistic when I think about in northern fisheries that there are sustainable fishing practices led by elders and indigenous people in the North, that we can learn from their best practices and implement some of those on these bigger fisheries, because, ultimately, if we want to achieve a sustainable fishing industry and sustainable fishers in this—fisheries in this province, we really have to take action on the stock for Lake Winnipeg, Winnipegosis and Manitoba.

And—so further to the whole piece on consultation, this afternoon members opposite had indicated that our fish envoy report was, I think the word was a useless exercise. Well, I can share with the members opposite that we do take consultation very seriously. We think that talking to Manitobans is never a useless exercise, especially when we're talking about the sustainability of our fishing practices. And so what the fish envoy had done, which—contrary to member's assertion that it was a useless exercise—the fish envoy did indeed hold meetings in several communities throughout Manitoba, which includes Thompson, Leaf Rapids, Norway House, Grand Rapids, Gypsumville, The Pas, Swan River, Eddystone, Matheson Island, St. Laurent, Gimli, Fisher River, Berens River, Lake St. Martin, the evacuees at Canad Inns Polo Park, Lake Winnipeg co-management board meetings, Hollow Water, Poplar River, Brochet, South Indian Lake, Cross Lake, Pukatawagan and Island Lake, as well as a few others.

So I would certainly hope that members opposite didn't think or wasn't meaning to assert that consultation with these groups, with these fishers from these communities was a useless exercise, because our government will never concede to the members opposite point that consulting is not a beneficial thing. And we will continue to consult with Manitobans—particularly our indigenous communities and our fishers on sustainability of our lakes.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I'm concerned by a number of things about the minister's comments. Lake Winnipegosis has forever been treated as the other lake and has never been taken as seriously by governments in this province since 1960, when the fishery did collapse. So you have an example of a collapsed fishery which continues to be collapsed now, almost 60 years later. And it was the lake which, when there was the SeaChoice report, was pointed out to be the worst of all the three major lakes.

So, if you're going to pick a lake where you could make the biggest difference in the shortest period of time, it's probably Lake Winnipegosis, because it's in the greatest need and it's not had the attention it should have had for 60 years—well, for 57 years. And there is an opportunity there.

* (16:40)

I'm quite concerned that the minister's government has been now there for a year and a half. Of all the communities that were consulted with,

the best one that would have been used for Lake Winnipegosis probably would have been Winnipegosis, and it wasn't included in the minister's list.

And so I think that it's time to make sure that it's not the forgotten lake once again and that it gets some real attention. It's had reports, and reports, and reports over the years but nobody, no government since 1960, has really acted. So it will be the measure of whether, in fact, you can make a difference.

Let me move from there to talk about mine cleanup.

Can the minister give a progress report on what's happening at Sherridon and Lynn Lake?

Ms. Squires: So member opposite is right to bring up the contamination of these tailings, the Sherridon tailings in particular, which has existed for more than half a century and the remediation is very—is a slow process.

I can inform the member that my department provides technical assistance to the Mineral Resources division to help develop remediation plans and help implement these strategies that would be beneficial for the community.

We are also working with the community in close collaboration on several of the issues, but, ultimately, the Mineral Resources division would be able to provide a more fulsome answer as to their remediation strategies thus far. We are there to provide that technical support.

What we are particularly concerned, from our department, our perspective, is we are monitoring the spring walleye, and, of course, we have a keen eye on watching the spawning activities that are happening there to ensure that the spring walleye has—is not going to be affected unduly by any decisions made.

Mr. Gerrard: Kississing Lake, which is near Sherridon, is an interesting lake because the right arm of the lake is the arm which is highly polluted, and the larger left part of the lake is relatively unpolluted. And the reason is that the flow of water goes down the right arm and then exits on the north part of that arm. And so you have a direct comparison between—in one lake—between an area that's badly affected and an area which is relatively unaffected. And I think if you're going to be

monitoring wildlife and fish, the comparison between those two areas is probably critical.

And it may be critical—I don't know that fish species—lake trout is quite prominent, for example, in the right arm—I'm not sure that people have actually looked at copper and zinc and cadmium, the minerals which are coming from the tailings ponds, in the fish species which people are eating in that arm. And that would be, again, a valuable comparison between fish species in that arm and the left part of the lake which is larger and which is relatively unaffected.

Let me move on to a third area. The flood protection depends critically on water retention, not just on drainage. And what is—the government in a year and a half hasn't yet produced a surface water management plan, so I'm interested in what the progress has been and where the government is right now.

* (16:50)

Ms. Squires: I'm happy to share with the member that we are looking at a holistic watershed management strategy. With climate change, we are dealing with excessive water, and we're also going to be dealing with—and we've dealt with in the past—droughts, and so how our government is taking—how we're approaching this is in a holistic manner.

We completed our consultations on October the 6th on three very important pieces of our watershed management strategy and that is growing outcomes in watersheds based on ALUS, alternative land use. And that is where we're going to be looking at working with producers that have potential wetlands on their property to restore those wetlands. And, in addition to grow, we're looking at modernizing our conservation districts as well as streamlining our drainage processes.

Now, I do want to mention that last week Friday I had the opportunity to meet with Jim Fisher from delta waterfall—fowl and he took me on an extensive tour of some wetlands and a really good example of the community of—in and around Minnedosa who are working to restore wetlands and are really enhancing their wetlands for the ecological benefit that these wetlands and watershed basins do provide our environment in total.

So we are certainly going to look to enhance our wetlands and streamlining the drainage process so that they can work hand in hand, that producers can have maximum yield on the acres in which they are hoping to produce, and setting aside those acres that

are problematic, that are consistently being flooded out, that we can work with them to designate those as wetlands.

We think that the ecological benefits from that would be very significant for our province, and ultimately it's about incenting landowners to do the right thing in the watersheds.

We did do a pilot in Roseau River on water retention strategies that was based on the work of the Red River basin and are looking forward to continuing on doing more work. And we are liking—likely to bring about legislation in the coming—oh, let's say months.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I have a few minutes left and so I thought I'd do a one-off. It's a question about loons and it's not a loony question. There was a very good story on CBC Radio on Saturday about—Quirks and Quarks—about the loon population declining.

I know the new deputy minister comes from a wildlife background and thought he might be familiar with the issue. They were indicating that the decline in the population is about 1.5 per cent a year, but loons, as I'm sure the deputy knows, have a very low reproductive rate. They have offspring every couple of seasons, and they felt that the cause of this decline in the loon population was what they were ingesting, in terms of lead sinkers on fishing bait, and down to one ounce was a problem, and they originally thought that it was the direct ingestion of the sinkers, but as they did further research, they were discovering it was because loons don't have teeth and they swallow fish whole, and the fish themselves may have the lead sinkers in them from trolling on the bottom of the lake and picking them up.

And that one and a half per cent decline didn't sound like much, but year over year, with the slope of reproductive rate, they had seen about a 25 per cent decline in the loon population in Canada.

I wonder if the department wanted to comment, what do we do to regulate lead in fishing gear, and do we go down to one ounce and prevent people from using that, because my knowledge of the fishing industry is this: that they are responsible? They understand the need for conserving all the various species we have.

But, if we don't actually tell them not to use these products, they're going to keep using them

without fully realizing what the impact is on an iconic species in not only Manitoba but the country.

So, just for a little fun, and actually because it's a serious topic, I wondered if you had any knowledge or information to share with us on that, on what we do to control lead bait on sinkers.

Ms. Squires: I thank the member for the question, and one of the great honours of working in this department is being able to work with people who are very passionate and committed to just ensuring that our species are protected and enhanced and that our populations are stable and are growing and are healthy.

And, to that end, I'm very fortunate to be working with my deputy minister, Rob Olson, who just has a—not just a wealth of knowledge and information about a myriad of topics that my department covers on, but he just also has a complete love and passion, and it's easy to work for people and to work with people who are inspired to ensure the protection of our species and—

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

JUSTICE

* (15:00)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration for the Estimates for the Department of Justice.

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

Could I get the minister to introduce her staff in attendance today.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I have with me today my Deputy Minister, David Wright, as well as our ADM of Admin and Finance, Maria Campos.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, and when your—when the opposition staff comes in, we'll introduce her.

So we'll continue. The floor is now open for—before we start, as previously agreed, questions for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Just before we had finished Monday, we were starting to discuss

the fentanyl task force in which the minister had indicated that there were Justice, Health, WPS, RCMP, College of Physicians—I'm just wondering—I had started to ask about when the last time that that fentanyl task force had actually met and how many times it has met.

So I was hoping that maybe there was some additional information available today on that.

Mr. Chairperson: I guess while we're waiting I'll get the opposition to introduce their staff.

Ms. Fontaine: This is Emily Coutts.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for the question, and I'm going to take—I'm going to endeavour to get that information to the member at another time. The person who's responsible for that particular area is not here with us today. So we'll just make sure that we get that information for the member.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, I appreciate that.

Can the minister advise if she's directed any specified funding to WPS and prevention to deal with the meth crisis?

* (15:10)

Mrs. Stefanson: We have donated through our Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund significant funds to the Winnipeg Police Service with respect to different lab equipment and naloxone kits, et cetera.

Specifically, I will just mention that we gave \$13,837 in lab equipment for the cargo UTV package trailer. We gave lab unit equipment for a drug scanner in the amount of \$39,550. We gave clandestine lab equipment and training—sorry, we—there was \$37,283.21 given there. Also, naloxone kits, we gave \$29,685. Training for drug experts, there were two courses at \$13,383.20. And portable ion scanners in the—which detects the trace of explosives and drugs in the amount of \$64,229.55.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for those numbers.

So those dollars came from the forfeiture fund, but is there any additional dollars that are going to flow to the WPS in respect of addressing and developing perhaps maybe a strategy internally to the WPS? Is there any additional dollars that will be flowing to them?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question, and of course it's an important one, and

we've moved to a system of block funding when it comes to police services and to municipal—to municipalities.

So the funding in particular—or specifically for the WPS doesn't come directly from the Department of Justice, it actually comes through Municipal Relations. So that would be a question to ask them. But certainly we do know that there is a block funding that goes to the WPS for their operations on an annual basis. And—but we have a tremendous amount of respect for those who work at the WPS, and we believe they know best how to manage their funds within—that we do supply them with. And so, you know, we want to—I just want to take the opportunity to thank all those police officers for what they do on a daily basis, as well, to help keep our communities safe. They see—they're the front line of—often who see this first-hand, the horrible things that are happening to individuals out there who are addicted to meth and opioids and other addictive drugs, and we just want to thank them for their service.

Ms. Fontaine: So we know that both the WPS and the RCMP are actually blaming the lower cost for meth's prevalence and 80 per cent of Manitoba's meth is moved from international countries by gangs, and so how is the—what is the plan of the minister to combat and really thwart and, if at all, stop this illegal flow?

Mrs. Stefanson: Thanks very much for the question, and certainly it's a very important one. I think we touched on this the other day when we were in—I guess it was Monday, when we were last in Estimates.

And, you know, our government takes a whole-of-government approach when it comes to this, and so you'll see that a significant amount of the legwork that takes place is within the Department of Health, but we are certainly partners, and we partner with Education, with other government departments, as well as police services and mental health and addictions, the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba and other organizations out there to see how we can help combat this very significant issue.

So, again, we take a whole-of-government approach when it comes to this.

Ms. Fontaine: So—and I'm glad that the minister has noted kind of that interdepartmental approach; certainly, obviously, works better than working in silos, as we've discussed previously.

And so I guess my question—my next question would be: How is the minister working with—how is the Justice Minister working in concert with the Minister of Health in respect of treatment beds for addictions, and are there any plans to add any new beds?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Chairperson: I guess before we continue, I just want to acknowledge that we have the 'formel' MLA for Dauphin, Stan Struthers, here with us in the loge.

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* (15:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: I will say this is primarily handled through the Department of Health, but again a whole of government approach we do have a senior member of our department who is a part of the review that's currently taking place with respect to mental health and addictions.

Manitoba is currently undertaking the development of a focused provincial mental health and addictions strategy to look at ways to improve mental health and addiction services across the province. Over 80 scheduled meetings took place from June to September of this year in many locations across the province. These involved individual and group discussions with health authorities, private and grant-funded mental health and addiction service providers, indigenous populations, other government sectors, families who have lived with and have experience in mental health and addictions, service users, newcomers, refugees, services and touched on the continuum of services across the lifespan from prevention to harm reduction to acute severity.

So hundreds of people were interviewed as a result of this process. There have been online surveys to provide feedback regarding access and co-ordination of mental health and addiction services. In Manitoba, were offered from September 18th to October 13th for service providers, the public, persons and families who have lived with this experience. Over 2,600 surveys were completed, and over half being completed by the public. So we're expecting, at some point, a final report with recommendations with respect to this.

Ms. Fontaine: So, just for clarification, is this the consultant that my colleague from Minto was asking questions about today? Is that the same consultant that is undertaking this work?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes.

Ms. Fontaine: So, from June into September, there's been about 80—is that what you—June until September there's been about 80 meetings from Brian Rush and that was what we'd indicated was about \$50,000 for that contract. So I'm—and I know that you had just finished saying that you were expecting a final report soon. Do you have any idea kind of the timeline that were looking at for that?

Mrs. Stefanson: This is probably questions that are better asked of the Minister of Health. I'm not privy to contracts, and so on, that are signed within the Department of Health. So it would be best to answer or to ask those questions of the Health Minister.

And I am not aware of the specific date for when a final review is expected.

Ms. Fontaine: Yes, and I guess I was just wondering because you said that in respect of, you know, the whole gamut and really kind of looking at addictions and the meth crisis and all that in a more holistic manner. That's why I was asking those questions in respect of, you know, timelines and stuff like that. And unfortunately, the Minister of Health, we've already finished, so—

An Honourable Member: There's always question period.

Ms. Fontaine: Yes, exactly. I know, yes. Exactly.

So the—Headingley's Winding River Long-Term Addiction treatment program has seen success in helping individuals overcome addictions with a focus on community integration. How is this particular facility funded, and have they seen an increase, or will they see an increase in respect of their very important work?

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you very much for your question, and I just want to start off by saying it's—I've had a wonderful experience, actually, when I visited Headingley—the Headingley correctional facility and specifically the Winding River components. And I had the opportunity to meet with three individuals. We went into a healing circle and we talked about their experience with this program.

It was very moving, some of the things that are happening. They were proud of all of the stages they had gone through and all the things that they were able to achieve. And it's quite a remarkable facility, and all those that work with it—of course, we work in partnership with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba there, as well. It's—they do amazing work

there, and I just want to thank all those people that work within that facility.

So, it's important that the member did talk about funding. This is—obviously continues to be funded and will continue to be so.

Ms. Fontaine: So one of the things that I had asked in my last question—so I'm glad to hear that it's going to be continued to be funded. So, I think that that's great, that's good to hear. I'm just wondering if there's going to be an increase in funding. But also, I'm wondering if—and I'm really glad that the minister had the opportunity to participate in a healing circle and actually hear from individuals that have gone through the program, which is always really beneficial and it's actually a privilege, really, to sit with people and hear their stories. That's a blessing, right?

So, in that context, is the minister or the department planning on expanding this program to other Manitoba correctional centres? Is there the potential for that?

* (15:30)

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question, and it's an important one. It is a—as we know, mental health and addictions issues is a significant issue when it comes to those people within our correctional facilities, and it is an important thing. We are looking at, right now, at expanding this program over to the women's correctional facility, as well. So there are—we're moving in that direction. We're not sure yet about the timing on that. We're just going through the process right now.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that.

So I'd like to kind of talk a little bit about the Justice review. I don't know if you're good in respect of your staff—okay, good. So we know that in February you announced that some of the elements—system-wide review of Justice would be released in April. We haven't seen anything. So what's the status on the review?

Mrs. Stefanson: You know, it's such a huge question; it's sort of hard to know where to start in terms of answering this. It's—there—the review of the criminal justice system is ongoing and it's in so many different areas of our justice system. I know that certainly this has been a big topic.

When I had the opportunity to go out to our federal-provincial-territorial meetings, the issue

around the challenges that we face with respect to the Jordan timelines is significant and we've had to change many things in Manitoba as a result of that decision and how we approach things. And so, that came in sort of the middle of all this, and you know, the further challenges that take place with respect to this. And so we continue, on a daily basis, to work with all our stakeholders to find different ways of managing the timelines in our court system.

Certainly, I know at our FPT meetings as well, something that Manitoba—or, our chief judge and the chief justices and I were—we announced a pilot project for Manitoba with respect to preliminary inquiries. And we feel that—and certainly, we started the dialogue on a national level when it comes to preliminary inquiries. And I think it's important that what came out of our latest meeting is that, you know, the federal government has now committed to their own reform there as well, and that's very significant. It's a significant move forward.

We have yet to see—that requires legislation that will be changed at the federal level, and we've yet to see those changes take place as yet, but we certainly—we know that there was a commitment by the federal government to make some changes there. So that's a—that will be a significant move forward with respect to not just court backlogs, but if you look at—preliminary inquiries are like pre-trials, and witnesses have to come forward and tell their story, and it's often very taxing on those witnesses to have to tell their—and the victims—to have to tell their story in a preliminary inquiry, and then more often than not, they go to a—you know, a full trial as well.

And it's—so, we know we've talked to victims' organizations as well, and they are supportive of our stand when it comes to preliminary inquiry reform, that they would rather not re-victimize the victims with respect to, you know, the court procedures. And so this is something that I think, when the feds do make these changes, it's going to be significant for Manitoba.

But again, with our whole criminal justice system reform, it's ongoing. This is just one area of it, and I'm sure the member will have questions about other areas as well. It's an ongoing process, so it's not sort of coming out with, oh, here's our criminal justice system reform package. It's just—it's fluid, is the way it is.

So that's the way to explain it.

Ms. Fontaine: So, yes, and I get that. I get it that any kind of, you know, justice review would be a multifaceted—and so, what are some of the actual areas that the justice review is actually currently looking at, you know, including preliminary inquiries, all of that stuff, but what are the other areas?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think one of the most important areas to look at is, if you look at—I mean, the system—and I don't want to get political here because that's not what I mean to do, but we really did inherit a system that needs significant change to it. Incarceration rates have increased over the years, and we need to look at that—I mean, a better way of dealing with, you know, the criminal justice system when it comes to our corrections facilities.

So we have put a significant emphasis on restorative justice. We've moved it from where it was previously and we put it under Community Safety now, which we believe is where it should be. And we're looking at expanding and looking at some changes there with respect to restorative justice, which, I believe, is a significant area, but not just restorative justice, but preventative justice.

* (15:40)

So, the member opposite will be familiar with organizations like Block by Block, Thunderwing, D.A.R.T., The Brandon Hub and other organizations out there that are looking at preventative justice as well, which—I'm very impressed with the work that is being done out there, and certainly Heather Leeman at Block by Block, we've had a few meetings with them and very impressed with—they really—they track their results. They're able to show the significant steps that they've taken to making a real difference in our community.

So we're focusing on restorative justice; we're focusing on preventative justice; and then, if we look at those who are in our correctional facilities, we're trying to find better ways of reintegrating those people back into society and starting at an earlier time where we start early to be able to work with various organizations out there to be able to find ways, you know, for them to have jobs, homes, hopefully get some addictions help or mental health issues and so on so that they can—they—once they leave the correctional facility and they enter back into society that they've got the tools that they need to survive. So that responsible reintegration initiative is something that we have spearheaded, and we've looked at our probation services and we've realigned

those to appropriately deal with that to help these individuals back into society, and we think that that's a really important part of this.

So it's that whole—the restorative justice, preventative justice, as well as the responsible reintegration initiative as well that we believe is the right approach and it's the direction that we've decided to go in.

Ms. Fontaine: So, in the Justice review, according to what you just shared, well, I take that there's kind of maybe three main—restorative, preventative and responsible reintegration, but you didn't mention—I mean in everything it's—I think in many respects it's very hard to kind of, you know, again, compartmentalize all of these things, because everything is obviously so interrelated and so interconnected, but you did mention like incarceration. Obviously, we know that the preliminary inquiries, probations—so, am—so from this total Justice review, is there any other areas that we've kind of missed in that?

And then I guess—and I get that it's, you know, ongoing, but will the department be releasing any kind of report in respect of this Justice review?

And I get that there's, you know, things that are ongoing, but at some point there should be something—in my mind anyways, who knows, right—in my mind there should be something that's kind of coalesced into like what is this Justice review look like.

Mrs. Stefanson: The other area that I just wanted to talk about is obviously the Manitoba Prosecution Services and the intensive case assessment process. And the member may be familiar with this, but we have, certainly within the last year and as part of the criminal justice system review, ICAP became a key place for the implementation of the criminal-justice-system-review-related initiatives involving the differentiation of cases' strategy in the Manitoba Prosecution Services.

So this included the expansion of pre-charge review of files, enhanced referrals to restorative justice programs supported by the new prosecution procedures, and regular measurement of outcomes that are achieved.

So the Manitoba Prosecution Services strategy has been to rotate experienced and junior Crown prosecutors through the ICAP unit to help spread the

necessary culture change required by the criminal justice system review.

And in February of this year ICAP was, in fact, expanded to include domestic violence and out-of-custody cases from the Winnipeg Police Service as well.

So there's been an expansion of ICAP. We believe it's the right way to go, and as a result of our review we've already taken the necessary steps to expand in this area as well.

So, again, the overall criminal justice system review, it's ongoing. I think to come out with a specific report is really just a snapshot in time, and I know the member can appreciate that, that it's just such an ongoing thing that takes place and we will continue to work with our stakeholders within the criminal justice system to ensure that we provide Manitobans with the best practices that we can with respect to the criminal justice system.

Ms. Fontaine: So, is it a review that is being handled internally, or has there been somebody brought in to do the review?

*(15:50)

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you for your question.

It is—it was an internal review that took place but, certainly, you know, we worked with various stakeholders as well; many stakeholders out there to help us develop the review. So—and, obviously, the purpose of the review is to make our criminal justice system more efficient and more effectively use resources which are intended to produce better results and increase public safety, as well.

Ms. Fontaine: So, with an internal review, there was no dollars that are attached to any of that review, then. I would imagine that there's no dollars expended on that.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes. This review was done internally with government—use of internal government resources.

Ms. Fontaine: So I still want to kind of go in respect of the review. But I kind of want to just talk a little bit because it was brought up in respect of restorative justice. And a couple of questions on there. Certainly, as somebody that's worked in restorative justice, I see the immense, immense benefits that come out of restorative justice.

So we understand that there's been cuts for some of the programs, or there's a review of the

dollars that are going to be allocated to, let's say, the John Howard Society, Onashowewin mediation services.

So, is that accurate? Has there been cuts or is there about to be cuts? Or there's not a current budget in place for those type of agencies that are doing that restorative justice work?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question.

And certainly, you know, she'll be aware that we inherited a significant challenge with respect to the finances of our province, and we're having to make some fairly difficult decisions as a province. And part of that is in—what we've been looking for is looking at programs that are working. We're looking for—we're looking at results and the value for money that we're getting.

And so certainly in some cases and, you know, in—specific to one of the areas that the member mentioned, the John Howard Society, the fact was, on the bail supervision program we were funding at the same level but the numbers were declining significantly over time. And so you're paying more and getting less in the way of services there.

*(16:00)

So—but having said that, we are looking at ways to—and opportunities to partner with people out there and broaden our network of agencies that we work with with respect to restorative justice initiatives. And, you know, certainly the John Howard Society is one of those. So we continue on with discussions about how we can work together to provide better services for Manitobans.

I mentioned earlier, Block by Block, and the results that they're able to provide us with. We're getting significant, you know—significantly positive results out of organizations like that, and so we want to continue to work with our partners in the restorative justice and preventative justice areas to ensure that we're providing better value for taxpayer dollars.

Ms. Fontaine: So is it strictly in respect of John Howard's bail supervision program that you've decreased the dollars? As you say, you—the government is paying more but getting less. So is it only those dollars that were decreased, or were it—

were there other overall dollars towards the program?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes. Again, when we're looking at an overall review of programming within—well, within the justice—the Department of Justice, but indeed across our government, we are looking at programs that are yielding, you know, real results and positive results for Manitobans. So, in the same instance, there are other organizations where we conducted this review where we're finding that we're spending more and getting less.

And so—and those were never reviewed under the previous government, and so this is something that—when we're looking at the significant challenges that we're faced with as a province, these are the types of decisions we need to make. But having said that, we continue to work with these organizations to see how we can work together towards our common goal of reducing crime out there and being able to help those individuals through a restorative justice way, and other ways, as well.

Ms. Fontaine: So—I just have to put on the record that I know the minister just said—which is a standard line from your side, I get it—that there was no review done by the government.

That's not true. I—when I was at Southern Chiefs Organization, there were actually several reviews of the program alongside Onashowewin, alongside mediation services. So that's—I need to kind of correct that for the record.

So what are the other organization—you know, other organizations that are doing restorative justice that the department is looking at or has already cut program dollars?

Mrs. Stefanson: There were no other reductions with respect to the restorative justice.

Ms. Fontaine: So the only reduced dollars is to the John Howard Society?

Mrs. Stefanson: The only area with—was with the Restorative Resolutions program that was started in partnership with the John Howard program in 1993 and the Restorative Resolutions office, I guess, was located with—co-located with the John Howard Society at 583 Ellice.

The number of restorative resolution cases had continued to decrease substantially to less than 1 per cent of the total provincial probation caseload. So, again, we're into a situation where we were, you know, as a program that's been around for, you

know, a long time that we simply were not getting the results from the program.

Ms. Fontaine: So, in respect of restorative justice, because I know that you're talking about that it is one of kind of the pieces of the review. Has there been an increase in diversion to some of our provincial programs that we have in respect of restorative justice? Do you have the numbers on what those diversion numbers look like?

* (16:10)

Mrs. Stefanson: We're just looking for the exact numbers here. But it's in my recollection that they went up by about a thousand cases this year that were diverted to—for restorative justice purposes.

Ms. Fontaine: Just so I can actually kind of just get a crash update, a review. Can you advise all of the organizations that are actually doing restorative justice across Manitoba? I've repeated like Onashowewin and stuff like, but actually probably there's more I would imagine, so.

Mrs. Stefanson: We have a list here. I don't think it's an exhaustive list though. I think there's probably been some other organizations that we probably need to just update the file but—the briefing note, but I think, you know, it's important to say that this will be ongoing and there—we are willing to work with various stakeholders out there who will help us to achieve the kinds of results that we want to achieve for Manitobans. So this list is by no means exhaustive, and certainly I know the member has some experience in this area, and if she has other organizations that she believes that we should be reaching out to as well, we're certainly open to ideas that she has.

But for right now Cross Lake, Fisher River Cree Nation, Hollow Water Community Holistic Circle Healing, MKO, the MMF Justice—sorry—Community Justice Program, the MMF Thompson justice program, Norway House Cree Nation, Onashowewin Winnipeg, Onashowewin Bloodvein, St. Theresa Point First Nation, the Youth Court project, Southern Chiefs Organization, the John Howard Society of Brandon, the Westman mediation, John Howard Society of Brandon, Westman and Parkland Restorative Justice Hubs, Mediation Services Winnipeg, mediation services Morden, and the Salvation Army.

Ms. Fontaine: So I know that Onashowewin has their main office just over here on Broadway. So, Onashowewin, they—well, in fact, I remember they

were trying to expand into, I'm sure it was like four or five or six communities.

So, at this point, are they only in Bloodvein then, other than their Winnipeg office?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, they actually go into a number of communities that I guess are just run out of the Winnipeg office.

Ms. Fontaine: So, okay, and miigwech. That—pretty much what I remember, except at Cross Lake, Norway House, St. Theresa.

Has there been an increase in the total overall budget for these restorative justice programs in Manitoba and, if so, what is the total amount in the increase and, if not, will there be an increase?

*(16:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for the question, and certainly many of these programs are co-funded with the federal government, and their funding has remained flat, and we're certainly in ongoing discussions with respect to the federal government for them to sort of—to look at investing further investments with respect to this area of restorative justice. And, certainly, you know, as a government, we're always trying to find ways to work from within and find better value for the money that we're spending. And, certainly, you know, there is an ongoing review of many of the programs out there right across the Department of Justice. But in this particular area, the federal government funding has remained flat. And, again, we'll be looking at a renewed partnership of some sort with them as we move forward with respect to restorative justice initiatives.

Ms. Fontaine: So I know that AJS has—the Aboriginal Justice Strategy dollars have remained pretty flat and consistent for many, many years, right, and I get that it's a cost-shared program. But is there going to be any increase from the department?

So save for that the federal government, you know, remains at the current level, to be able to support some of the restorative justice programming in Manitoba—certainly even when I was doing it, it was never enough, and I always can say we can do more, obviously, right? So I'm—so I get that piece, but is there going to be an increase or a decrease from the department on any of these programs?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, I think it's, you know, it's important. There's many great programs out there that—especially in the restorative justice area that,

you know, we—if we had all the resources, if I could find that pot of gold and if we could invest more in some of these areas, that would be, you know, the best thing to be able to do. But certainly we're in a situation here provincially where that is not the case. We have yet to find that pot of gold. So we're not able to look at, you know, increases at this stage.

But I think, more importantly, it's important that as we look at our partnerships in the restorative justice area that we're looking at ways to—at different ways of doing things to make things more effective and efficient and providing better results.

So we will work with all of our stakeholders, in this case in the restorative justice area, to ensure that we get that better value for money for Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: So what I will share, and I get that there's not—that you're not able to look at any increases on this time because you haven't found the pot of gold, I get that. So what I will share and I'd like to put on the record is that, you know, when we start using the discourse of effective and efficient, it really does—it kind of, like, starts to embed that language for, you know, who knows, justifications later on down the road or, I'm not sure, when people start to use that narrative.

I do want to share, though. that, you know, the folks that work, you know, in these restorative justice programs are actually some of the most efficient and effective people that I know in Manitoba and, you know, do work above and beyond for the little bits of dollars that they do get towards their pay. And I know from myself when I was at Southern Chiefs Organization I got—I think I was making \$50,000 a year and my files were enormous. I did everything because often indigenous organizations get less but to do more.

So it's actually the reverse of what the minister said earlier in respect of, you know, the Restorative Resolutions program. You were finding that you were paying more and getting less. Whether or not that's true, I think, you know, probably—there's probably two different perspectives on that, but I certainly will say that both the federal and provincial governments are probably paying—I would suggest to you paying less and getting far more for really important work that they're doing in the communities and oftentimes, particularly in indigenous organizations, folks volunteer to do this work. So—and Greg would know this, that there's a lot of community justice circles that all of the folks

that are involved in that, that organize them, that participate in them, they're all volunteers.

So, certainly, you know, I would, you know, want to put on the record and I want to put on the record that, you know, for the folks that are doing this incredible work and this important work and this hard work in their communities or outside their communities that I lift them up for the work that they're doing that often goes unrecognized. And, certainly, I think that it's problematic when we start to look in the context of these organizations and we start to use a narrative of, you know, well, we're looking for effective and efficient programming when I know that these folks—some of these folks have been working on this, and knows this to be true as well, for years and years and years. So I do want to put that on the record.

So miigwech for that information on there. I just want to kind of go back because I kind of went back and forth in respect of—we were talking about the justice review, but I had wanted to just quickly touch on that restorative justice for—programming in Manitoba.

So we know that the minister had sent the federal Minister of Justice a proposal to replace preliminary inquiries with an out-of-court discovery. So we're wondering what the status is of that proposal. Has the minister responded? Has it—and maybe it can be explained to me because certainly I'm not an expert, but, yes—no, if the minister's responded and what the—whether or not she's willing to look at that and move forward with that.

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for her comments, and I don't by any means want to leave the impression out there that I don't have a tremendous amount of respect for those that work in these—in the restorative justice area. There is some incredible people who are doing incredible work out there, whether it's volunteers or it's, you know, those who work in it as well. I'm tremendously impressed by the work that they do and we will continue to look at ways to provide this service within the means of our Justice budget as well and—but I didn't—I just wanted to address that issue first.

Secondly, with respect to preliminary-inquiry reform, it's something actually that's—when we first had the discussion with the chiefs, so both chief justices and the chief judge provincially changed. She came in just as I was coming in as a new minister as well and it's something that the three chiefs have been talking about for a couple of years

now in terms of preliminary inquiry reform and I think we were finally able to come into a line and be able to present this proposal to the federal government.

* (16:30)

Again, it requires the federal government to make legislative changes. It's not something we can do here in our province and we needed to look at other provinces to see, especially with respect to the changes with respect to Jordan and the timelines there. It was significant to move forward in light of those—in light of that decision with respect to preliminary inquiry reform.

And so, we did send that letter off to Ottawa. We initiated a discussion. Preliminary inquiries have been around since the late 1800s. It's—they've been around for a long time, and so this kind of reform is precedent-setting in our country. And we're very proud in Manitoba to have led that discussion to get that dialogue going, especially in light of the Jordan case and the outcomes from that.

And what it did is it started a dialogue across the country with my counterparts. They started to look into their case management in the criminal justice system and realize pretty quickly that this kind of reform is necessary.

And so, at our recent FPT meeting, we were given the indication by the federal government that there will be reforms in this area; we just don't know to what extent. It looked like they were willing to go even further than what our pilot project suggested, which is more of a—you know, a doing away with preliminary inquiries at different levels, and so—and that was primarily driven out of Quebec and Ontario, which found that, in doing away and eliminating preliminary inquiries altogether would have a significant impact on their court backlogs. And so they were able to come forward with some significant numbers and what that meant to their provinces.

So it really—you know, it's one thing about the federal government—they sure listen to Quebec and Ontario; they don't always listen to Manitoba. But, certainly, we were proud to be a part of that discussion and get that moving forward, and it looks like it will be part of a package of reforms that will take place, they said, sometime this fall, but I have yet—and the member asked for an update on this. I have yet to hear back from the federal government as to when they will be introducing that piece of

legislation, but that legislation will go far beyond just preliminary inquiry reform; it will be—it will go across—it will be reforms to the entire criminal justice system as well that will have impacts on our court backlogs, I think, in many ways and in positive ways, but, you know, there are some concerns, I guess, we have with part of that.

But, again, we'll wait and see what that package looks like, and I haven't been given any indication yet other than they said that it would be sometime this fall.

Ms. Fontaine: So, just to be clear, there's been no response from the federal minister in respect of the proposal, then, other than this reform that's coming down the pipe. But other than that, in the specific proposal that you—or the minister submitted, there's been no response to date?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, actually, we had a—I had a discussion with the federal minister about it, and, you know, she was—she's open to—she was open to the discussion. And we had a good discussion, but in specific to our reform, I mean, I think what she wanted to do was canvass other provinces as well to see if there's this kind of an appetite for this kind of reform. And so, from there, it kind of dovetailed into a full-on discussion, which was great to have, at our federal-provincial-territorial meeting.

In fact, we had a specific meeting—like, specific to criminal justice system reform, which is the first, I believe, of—well, certainly, that I know in recent history that's taken place. And there was a great discussion on many issues which included preliminary inquiry reform. So there was a specific meeting of that, and then there was a more recent FPT meeting where we fleshed out some of those reforms so—and preliminary inquiries being one of those.

Ms. Fontaine: So we know that—did the minister consult with the Canadian Bar Association prior to sending that proposal? And did they take issue with the proposal, or what were their thoughts? Has she met with them since the proposal? Several questions in there.

Mrs. Stefanson: Sorry, we're just trying to recall specifically in terms of the timing. It's not—because we've met with them, you know, a few times, and certainly, with respect to preliminary inquiry reform. Not everyone is on board and in favour of it, but—and I know that, certainly, the defence bar expressed their concern to us. And I think that, you know, there

are things that we will work together with the defence bar on, and—but what—we can't always agree on everything. And the fact of the matter is we need to run a criminal justice system. We need to ensure that we move people through the system in a more efficient and effective way. And this preliminary inquiry reform will allow for that.

So I know the Canadian defence bar has expressed their concern to the federal government, and they have here as well. But there are many stakeholders out there that recognize and understand who we have met with, as well, that are in favour of this kind of reform.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm curious if the minister sees a benefit in respect of preliminary inquiries in the process.

Mrs. Stefanson: I think with the fact it actually came from the Stinchcombe case where they required that there's a greater disclosure—Crown disclosure—disclosure of evidence. And so, certainly, since that—and that was—when was that case. It was in the early '90s, I believe.

So since that has transpired, there really is that sharing of evidence and the obligation of disclosure. And so, really, you know, it's—what's happened with preliminary inquiries is they become a pre-trial to a full-blown trial. And so you're—it's like a mini trial to the real trial. And these trials, like the preliminary inquiries, take a significant amount of time. And so the problem with this is that it—you know, with the time frames under the Jordan case of 18 months in the provincial court and 30 months in the federal court, when you're doing preliminary inquiries as well, you know, you're—it can cause, you know, further delay in the system. And so that's why we wanted to look at a better way of doing this.

And I will just mention, as well, that when it comes to victims' groups who I've met with, they agree with this because, of course, victims are—often have to come forward and testify at preliminary inquiries as well as then testify again at a trial. And so it's re-victimizing the victims as well. And we believe that that's just not right. And so we agree with victims' groups when it comes to that, as well.

Ms. Fontaine: So, as much as I don't want to do this, can we take a two-minute recess to use the washroom?

Mr. Chairperson: Is it agreed by both the minister and the opposition to take a two-minute break?
[Agreed]

We're going to take a two minute—say, a five-minute break? Two minutes? Okay, two minutes' break. We recess and we'll reconvene, then, after two minutes.

The committee recessed at 4:40 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:42 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll continue—reconvene for the Estimates for the Department of Justice.

The honourable member for St. Johns, next question.

Ms. Fontaine: So we know that the government put out an expression of interest for the private industry—oh, I'm sorry, I don't know why I do that, sorry—to create a cannabis framework. How many offers did the government receive?

Mrs. Stefanson: This was actually—there were 60. But this—I just will say to the member, really, this is being managed on this side out of the Department of Growth, Enterprise, Trade. But it was 60.

Ms. Fontaine: Is the minister confident that Manitoba can meet the federal government's legalization timeline for cannabis?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank the member for the question, and certainly, you know, our main concern about the deadline was articulated extremely well by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. And as the Minister of Justice, you know, I'm very concerned about public safety issues, and so I'll speak to the time frame and the deadline from that perspective. And the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police indicated how they have a concern with the deadline, that they don't believe that they can be ready to do this. And they actually looked for a six-month or a year extension, as well, so that from a public safety standpoint we can ensure that our police forces are ready to take this on.

Ms. Fontaine: So I guess, from the minister's perspective, and because you repeated it several times in respect of public safety, so what is the minister's exact concerns in respect of the legalization of marijuana and public safety?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, we're concerned about ensuring that our police forces are appropriately trained in the area of drug-impaired driving. Right now, not all police officers are trained in the roadside—the drug recognition roadside testing, so—

and that takes time to get those officers appropriately trained, and I think that's why—it's one of the reasons why they've looked at needing an extension so that we can ensure that officers are appropriately trained.

It's also, you know, known that there isn't a device right now that has been approved by the federal government to date that will be able to test for the level of toxicity of someone with, you know, in the drug-impaired driving area. And so without that device and without that training, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has stated that there is a concern.

We share that concern with them and certainly, as a Minister of Justice, I want to ensure that our officers have the appropriate training and that they have the devices that they need in order to carry out public safety for not just Manitobans but, indeed, Canadians.

Ms. Fontaine: So certainly we've known that this is coming down the pipe. I mean, after the last federal election, certainly we knew that this was coming down, and actually I remember last year—actually I don't even remember the time, but we were discussing this with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries when they did their report with Minister Schuler. When was that? At some point, anyways.

And so we knew that this was coming down the pipe, right, and I remember having those questions and asking, like, you know, what was the government doing in preparation of this, and I remember repeatedly, because I asked about seven times, and repeatedly the minister had said that, well, we're not going to really do anything because we don't know what's coming; we don't know what the legislation is going to look like. Repeatedly, that was what was said.

And so, you know, when we talk about the time frame in which we're operating and we said—now we're talking about training, and certainly that's a huge—it's important that, you know, all of our policing institutions and members get the proper training.

So I guess the question is, is that we've known that this is coming down the pipe. I know several months back asking repeatedly the minister what was being done, was the Province doing an environmental scan in respect of, you know, what we're going to need, the infrastructure that we're going to need, like, the infrastructure needs totality that we're going to need to be able to kind of execute

this legislation. And now, you know, nine months down the road, we're still talking about training and devices.

So, to this end, what has been done to date by the department to prepare for the legalization of marijuana? So, has there been a directive to the WPS and to Brandon and to the RCMP in respect of training, and what does that look like? Like, what has been done to date?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I think we—and I want to thank the member for the question, but I think, you know, she will recall that we introduced a bill called The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act, very early on. We took a very proactive approach as a Province. In fact, many of my counterparts across the country looked at us as being, you know, a lead on this and taking action right away in terms of the public safety side and health side of this. And so the member will recall that that's what we did as well.

We, also, as she indicated already, we put out an expression of interest on the distribution side and we received 60 responses from that.

We've never stopped moving forward on this file and we've taken, in fact, a very proactive approach, and I think we've been recognized for doing so from many of our counterparts across the country.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, I mean, I suppose we'll probably differ in that opinion on whether or not there's been enough that's been done. I mean, you know, like introducing a bill and having, you know, some calls for proposals isn't the same as the logistics that it undertakes to be able to get the training co-ordinated for, I mean, hundreds of police officers right across the country—or across Manitoba.

* (16:50)

So has any of that work started with any of the policing institutions that we have in Manitoba, even if we're just looking at the training, the curriculum for the training, the facilitators for the training, the time schedule for the training? Has any of that taken place?

And I know that I used to do training for the WPS and for the RCMP in respect of indigenous women in Canada. And that often took quite a while to kind of co-ordinate because you've got to get—you know, obviously police members can't be on duty and we've got to get them co-ordinated in their training, and so it's a lot of infrastructure; it's a lot of logistics.

So what has been done nine months' out to the legalization of marijuana?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I actually agree with the member. I share her frustration in all of this, because we know that there are two bills, Bill C-45 and C-46, that are still outstanding. They haven't even passed federally on this yet, and so there's many more questions out there than there are answers from the federal government with respect to this, including the roadside screening devices—or testing devices. So the regulations aren't in place because the legislation hasn't passed. We've got many questions around those as well that affect and have an impact on decisions that we make locally here.

So I know there's been some frustration across the country; we're not the only province that has some challenges with respect to this. In fact, I am co-chairing right now a task force, along with the Minister of Justice in Alberta, which is tasked with coming back with talking to our counterparts on cannabis across the country and coming back with a report to the Council of the Federation, which is the premiers across the country. And so we are in the process of finalizing that, but I can tell you we are not the only province that has challenges, because the federal government is not able to answer some of the many questions that we have, including are some of the questions that the member is asking.

So it's not just as simple as coming up with a plan and implementing a strategy when it's dependent upon another level of government, their passing of legislation and their passing of regulations. So, again, we share her frustrations with not being able to move forward faster, but that's the reality of what we're faced with.

Ms. Fontaine: So, I mean, to be clear, I'm not frustrated, not in the slightest. I'm just wondering in respect of, you know, some of the things that can be done on the front end. And certainly training is one of them. I mean, it does seem, you know, that there's been a lot of resistance in respect of this, what is the inevitability of the legalization of marijuana by this government, right? That's, I mean, that's how it appears. And it is what it is. So, I mean, I just see that, you know, in the context of this kind of resistance to this legalization, that there hasn't been much in respect of kind of mapping out some stuff that can be done, you know, prior to, you know, this—you know, these bills, as she's saying.

So I guess, you know, what is the minister's, like, goals in respect of, you know, as we are nine

months out from the legalization of marijuana? And I guess the other piece is, you know, when we're looking at these, you know, roadside testing devices and—like, what's the threshold? Has the department even started to kind of look at any of that piece and, you know, kind of that scientific number and stuff like that? I mean, where are we at with that in Manitoba in all of that kind of piece?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I want to thank the member for that, and, certainly, you know, we're not stalling in any way, shape or form at all. We're moving forward. We've taken a proactive approach with our Cannabis Harm Prevention Act. We will continue to move forward with our—we did our expression of interest. We'll continue to move forward. We've announced today that within the next few weeks we'll be out with our distribution model. So we're not stalling at all.

But I will tell you, with respect to the threshold that the member talks about, this again is our area of frustration because that's a decision that is going to be made by way of regulation by the federal government. And again, that regulation can't come out until after the bills are passed. And so we've got a significant challenge here. We can't move forward with anything until we know what the federal government is doing. And we don't know that.

Ms. Fontaine: Is the minister currently exploring any additional legislation in respect of the legalization of cannabis for Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, we are.

Ms. Fontaine: If the minister would be so kind as maybe—if she could just maybe expand on what some of that legislation is, and there she's shaking her head, so—but do we know when she plans on introducing that legislation to the House—again, nine months into the legalization of marijuana?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think officials are reviewing the federal legislation and are considering implications and how that would affect our laws here in Manitoba.

Ms. Fontaine: So, in respect of those roadside testing devices, I mean, certainly there are many people across the country and certainly people in Manitoba that are also—have other kinds of drugs in their system—pharmaceutical.

So, when we're looking at what the infrastructure is that Manitoba is currently pursuing, or what the infrastructure is in order to detect those, is the department looking at any of that and trying to discern between the two or the several and marijuana—and?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, I think the purpose of it, obviously, is to detect impairment. If someone is driving and is impaired in any way, shape or form, regardless of what the substance is, it is harmful to people in our streets. And so that's what we want to ensure, and that's why we introduced the Cannabis Harm Prevention Act, to allow, you know, the police services, if they believe that someone is impaired, to be able to—that there's a 24-hour suspension on their driver—on driving. And we believe that's a responsible approach—

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

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Pivniuk): The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

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